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"There was something possessive in his clasp."

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TO SAN JACINTO

—Or, THE GRITO—

A NOVEL BY

MONCURE LYNE



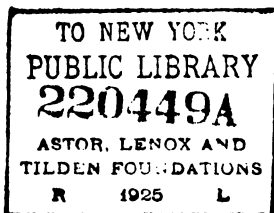
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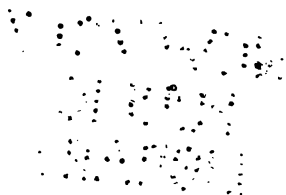
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DEDICATED
TO
MY MOTHER

TO THE READER

As a child I used to enjoy listening to the tales of an old ranchman who had fought in the wars against Santa Anna and drawn a white bean at Salado.

His reminiscences included also tales of Davy Crockett and other heroes of the Alamo. He had known personally Deaf Smith and scores of Indian hunters and sat along with Bigfoot Wallace by the camp-fires of the Rangers. Like a spiritualist at his bidding, these pioneers' souls would come forth, divested of the graveclothes in which historians have shrouded and laid them away in the dust of the archives. Brave, stalwart men of flesh and blood were they, those early Texans, under whose buckskin shirts throbbed hearts as daring as any that ever beat neath the armor of crusader.

The strange dominion they inhabited is now the land of the past. The period of their existence was those epic days when reality made romance, and the partnership of man with nature had not been dissolved. Such, however, was the vital strength of their patriotism that they not only outlived oppression but will live always in the chronicles of the country and the hearts of the people.

That more broadcast may be scattered a knowledge of the fiery trials through which these martyrs

passed in establishing liberty, has prompted my collecting these reminiscences under the title of

"THE GRITO."

In weaving this work the woof—the historical facts—comes from the shuttle of truth ; but as coloring is necessary to a tapestry, for warp I have used a little love-tale, a romance from the skein of imagination. The only liberty taken as a novelist is the insertion of the somber shadow of the Mier episode out of its chronological order, though the incident in detail is correct. My reason for so doing was that it portrayed Mexican cruelty in sharp black lines, and enhances the glorious light illumining the San Jacinto field, where independence was won.

If characters many be introduced, not one of them could be omitted, for like the children of Jacob they wrested the land from the enemy. And so when Texas portioned out her territory, names of worthy sons such as Karnes, Deaf Smith, Jack and Cameron find a place in her geography, transmitted there from history. The wreath of oak and palm leaves on the seal of the State might well typify their valor and victory, for entwined they complete the beauty of The Lone Star.

THE AUTHOR.

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THE GRITO

CHAPTER I

JOSÉFA'S BLUE SILK

The Mexicans are a people of proverbs. Like seaweed on the ocean of their polite speeches, whose surf seldom touches any grain of sincerity, float numerous adages, some of which attract attention, as, "Those whom the gods love they let live in Texas;" and that other maxim voicing the sentiment that, "Having once tasted the waters of the San Antonio River, one will return to quaff more."

Stale though these axioms be, yet they hold cardinal truths as time has exemplified—for no land in the West appealed more strongly to seekers of home or fortune than the beauty of the Bexar country of Texas, with its fine grazing pastures linking the cattle section with the fertile fields to the northward, and centering attraction in the quaint old town of San Antonio.

"San 'Tone de Bexar," as it was frequently called, was in the year eighteen hundred and thirty-five a conglomeration of cosmopolitanism, in which the Spanish element largely prevailed. On the banks of the sluggish blue-green waters of the San Antonio

River, bordered by mesquite and pecan, rose the adobe of the Mexican and the log cabin of the Anglo-Saxon, while in the distance, like a speck on the horizon, was the wigwam of that race which ever makes a picturesque setting for the history of our country. The tepee had made room for the adobe and in turn the adobe was to give place to the cabin; for the lax hold of Mexico on this land was clay, while the American was grasping for it with the strength of the live oak.

It did not need a prophet to discern the struggle that must come when the Anglo-Saxon, fulfilling his mighty destiny, would seek to wrench this fair country from Mexican bondage; for already this new factor could claim existence in the womb of the great Southwest, and soon would begin the travail of liberty—the birth of freedom.

Seen through the clear, translucent atmosphere of a balmy clime neath a turquoise sky, the old Spanish settlement, nestled in its cup-shaped valley bordered by the Guadalupe foot-hills, looked like a tawny beast asleep. The houses, mostly Moorish in design, were widely scattered, the two most important buildings being the cathedral of San Fernando, the belfry of which served as a watch-tower to keep a lookout for Indians; and the Alamo, which combined presidio with church, but was now used simply as a fort.

Below the city, to the southward, were other edifices of similar structure, giving to San Antonio the sobriquet of "The City of Missions." Like scattered beads from the rosary of some dead monk, they stretched over a radius of nine miles or more,

and were known as the Missions of La Concepción, San José, San Juan de Capistrano and San Francisco de la Espada; but these, though more stately in design, were not destined to the glory of the Alamo. They simply marked the receding footprints of Old Spain.

Caravans of mules, laden with ingots of silver from the region beyond the Rio Grande, daily stopped in San Antonio on their way to the East; while smugglers and peddlers from the Sabine, bound for the West, halted for refreshment in this gay, gambling settlement, where Mexican jugglers entertained the crowds with feats of dexterity and skill and the *fiestas* of the Church attracted alike pagan and priest. The *cachuca* was nightly danced on the plazas to the music of castanet and guitar, so that the little frontier city breathed a strange, wild life, as is ever the case when the mingling of civilization begets a new race. The germs of this life combined the grandiloquent, siesta-loving, passionate romance with the practical, plain, blunt, hardy element, vitalized by pioneer determination and renaissance by prairie vigor.

The plazas were not defined by a surveyor's compass, but shaped according to the dictates of Nature into spots of beauty, luxuriant with vegetation kissed by a half-tropic sun. One was known as the Military Plaza; the other, the Plaza de las Islas, so called for the Island Spaniards, who at the founding of San Antonio had come from the Canaries at the king's command, so that this new colony might be peopled with the best blood of old Spain.

The House of the Priest on the Military Plaza was a place almost as well-known in the *locale* of the city as the Alamo. It was the tavern for the traveler, the liberty-hall for the lounge, and the salon where the Priest exercised his silent yet potent influence for purity in that muddy stream called Mexican government; and yet the Priest, Father Clement, was not a Spaniard, but a French Jesuit. His nationality, however, mattered not, since above all else he was a born diplomat, ingratiating himself in the lives of those about him, and by the assurance of his sympathetic interest grappling to himself the affection of the community. Perhaps the secret of his power lay in his knowledge not only of human nature, but the people as individuals. He knew their characters as well as names; their hates as well as loves; their joys as well as sorrows. He was not an ascetic, but a mingler—thus we find him today going to the racing. The populace of Bexar, esteeming good horsemanship a proof of respectability, were all greatly interested in this event, and whatever harmlessly entertained them the Jesuit indulged and favored.

Father Clement as he hurried along was a picturesque figure. The hair on his tonsured head was beginning to show the touch of frost, yet it had been of a blackness that caused his shaven cheeks to assume a bluish tint. His large, dark eyes were not rimmed with age, neither were they softened, and despite the flicker of pensive sadness often lurking in them, shone with a piercing light, seeming to read one's very soul. His mouth was wide and strong; a slightly cleft chin harmonized well with

his square, firm jaw. A phrenologist might have accurately discerned his character by his finely proportioned head, but even a child with a mere glance could have told that the Priest was a man whose *yea* meant *yea*, and those who knew him best deemed it unwise to dispute his nay once it was uttered.

Leaving the old, narrow street that meandered like a tangled thread through the city, Father Clement emerged on the Plaza de las Islas, which he rapidly crossed, and entered a pretentious adobe dwelling with that familiarity manifesting itself when one is in the habit of frequenting a home.

"Joséfa, Joséfa!" he called.

"Yes, Padre, I am coming."

"Well, then, hurry, my little one, for it is already time we were starting. Do not primp so, my *chiquita*."

"Here I am now," said the girl, courtesying low as she entered the room.

"Vanity of vanities!" exclaimed the Priest, solemnly shaking his head, though his eyes rested admiringly on the vision before him. Joséfa had never looked lovelier. Her big, black eyes were bright with fun; like damask the color glowed in her cheeks through the soft, clear, olive skin, while her full lips, parting in a smile, revealed teeth regular as a string of pearls—and yet there was something new in her beauty, puzzling though pleasing to the Priest. The girl, noting the scrutiny of his gaze, hastened to enlighten him.

"It is my dress," she said; "is it not lovely?" And catching her skirt so as to show its great width, Joséfa, humming a fandango, began to dance, for

so filled was she with youthful buoyancy it seemed impossible to keep still.

Father Clement smiled indulgently.

"Thou wilt make me think this is Paris instead of San Antonio; but women are the same the world over when it comes to frills and finery. One might suppose that thou wert an angel that had stolen a piece of sky for a robe."

"It did not come out of the sky, though it is as blue as the heavens; but out of an old chest, packed away with lavender, and I suspect is an heirloom from my father's mother."

"Very probably she brought it from the Canaries," said the Priest, adding, with that love of detail characteristic of those past middle life: "for the Urreas were among the wealthiest of Island Spaniards, and so—"

"But you have not seen my hat," was the irrelevant interruption; and slipping out of the room, Joséfa soon returned wearing a sombrero that would have suited the taste of a ranchéro, save that a long white ostrich plume added graceful effeminacy.

The Priest thought to himself what a picture she would make could some artist sketch her just as she stood. Aloud he said: "Does your Uncle Ramon approve of your costume?"

Drawing down the corners of her mouth in mock sobriety, Joséfa lifted a warning finger, as she replied:

"Padre, not a word must you breathe about it, for he would fain have me wear a mantilla over my head and only peep out at his friend Don Castrillo, but I shall not so much as even look at him!"

"I promise." And the Priest's voice, as if the mention of Castrillo were distasteful, held in it a note of irritation which vanished as he continued:

"If life were a legend, with that dress and hat thou wouldst surely meet the prince today."

"The prince! O Padre! and what would he be like? Would he be tall and fair and —"

"More likely he would be dwarfish, with a broken back, and a squint in his eye or a wart on his nose."

Father Clement then threw back his head and laughed at the disappointment his drollery brought to the girl's face.

"Come, come, my child, life is stranger than a story. Cheer up, who knows but what we may meet him after all? Let's off to the racing."

"Who knows? *Quien sabe?*" repeated she, as a deeper tint dyed her cheeks.

The Priest deemed it best for them to go afoot, for though Joséfa's burro was gentle, yet there would be many spirited mustangs abroad that day, and horses, like people, were to be corrupted by example. This preference for prudence carried weight with the señorita, who always enjoyed walking in the company of Father Clement; so leisurely they strolled along, as the distance was not great.

Since the Priest first trudged this sun-glistening white path—the old San Antonio Road, the Appian Way of Texas, though scarce more than a trail—eighteen years had passed. Time, however, can not always be reckoned by calendar, for years are but arbitrary distinctions after all. Father Clement was today a younger man in feeling and hope than he

had been when, disappointed at the destiny of Napoleon's dreams, he had sought the New World as a Champ d'Asile, a place of refuge; but with the prayer in his heart to the good God and the Blessed Virgin that come what would he might ever remain a faithful Frenchman.

Voyage across the Atlantic had been given him my Jean Lafitte, who, albeit his ships menaced the traffic of those times, yet the pirate's heart cherished a love for Napoleon amounting almost to idolatry; and this made him quick to recognize with friendliness all who were French in feeling like Father Clement.

As the Priest now walked by the side of Joséfa the reality of the present faded from view and he was living over the evening when, footsore and weary, Don Alphonso, Joséfa's father, a true son of the Church, bade him welcome with courtesies more elaborate than the busy world has time for today.

Having traveled in many lands, the Priest had become a citizen of the world, easily adapting himself to circumstances. With Don Alphonso as audience he recounted the glories of the wars of France, and the Spaniard listened, partly in wonder and partly with that incredulity with which one lends an ear to a soldier's tale. Their acquaintance soon ripened into a comradeship that was to endure, the cord binding them being congeniality—the one was an interesting talker, the other, that necessary adjunct an attentive listener. Entertained well, they smoked away the hours, taking no note of time until the advent of a babe began a new epoch in the Mexican home.

Don Alphonso had counted much on the coming of this little stranger who was to inherit his fortune and maintain his *hacienda*, but great was his disappointment that Fate had seen wise to send a daughter when all his hopes had centered upon a son. This, though, was a minor trouble to the real sorrow awaiting him, as the mother's life was the ransom the infant cost.

After the burial the Priest's presence proved a great comfort to the stricken husband, who would not hear of his departure. So it happened at the baby's baptism the Frenchman stood godfather, bestowing upon her the name Josephine in honor of Napoleon's empress. Though Don Alphonso admired the history of the beautiful Creole, yet the word Josephine seemed harsh to the music-loving ear of the Mexican, hence he changed it to "Joséfa," by which she became known to those about her, until even Father Clement adopted the habit of calling her by no other.

As the child grew she rejuvenated the Priest's interest in the world, and had she been flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone he could hardly have loved her more. All the resources within his power were taxed for her amusement and instruction; and from the full fount of his learning the girl quaffed knowledge in pleasant draughts, enjoying the benefits of his toil without realizing the drudgery it had cost. The strange stories he told, gathered from legend and experience, stirred her fancy with fascination; so though she lived in an adobe of clay, all her spare moments were spent in dreamland. None of Father Clement's tales interested her as much as

his account of the girlhood of the Empress Josephine and none left so great an impress. With that intuition that forstalls the actual, that anticipates the real, Joséfa early became convinced that her own future was to be eventful, like, in a measure, the one for whom she was named. She thus developed into maidenhood under conditions vastly different from the atmosphere of San Antonio de Bexar.

* * * * *

The Priest and his godchild nearing the riding-ground, stopped for a while near the San Pedro Springs, choosing for their resting-place the shade of one of the large pecans. Sitting there watching the assembling crowd, Joséfa noticed in the distance a moving object that attracted her attention. Closer and closer it came until the girl could plainly discern it was a horseman, but there was something about him that rendered his appearance different from equestrians familiar to her. As he drew nearer she noted that the movements of his animal were with longer strides than those taken by a Mexican horse and that the trappings as well as the dress of the rider were simpler.

When plainly in view a quicker pulsation throbbed in the veins of the señorita, bringing a bright glow to her cheeks; for the stranger had halted his steed and was mopping the perspiration from his brow. Never before had Joséfa seen any one like him. His hair was thick and curly, and playing as it did above a forehead broad and wide seemed to catch the sunlight in its gold. His beardless face showed a large, firm mouth; a jaw square and strong, that might have given to his face an unpleasant suggestion of

predominance of will-power, had not the soft light in his blue-gray eyes mellowed his countenance into a harmony of frankness and strength.

The rider was Charles Dabney, a Virginian, who had recently migrated to Texas, and felt a stranger in the vicinity of San Antonio. Having watered his horse and refreshed himself, he turned to the Priest and inquired when the riding would commence. As he spoke a peculiar light flickered over the face of Father Clement, caused by the prejudice his tongue revived.

"I do not speak English," quickly replied the Jesuit in French, forgetful he was in a Spanish-speaking country.

This response brightened the face of the stranger, for though he had a knowledge of French, of Spanish he knew little. When he attempted to inform the Priest of this fact a smile, half smirk in its leniency, lurked near the corner of the Frenchman's mouth, for Dabney spoke the French of William and Mary College rather than the French of Paris or even Louisiana.

Father Clement having supplied all necessary information, naught else remained to be done than for Dabney to mount his horse and canter in the direction whither the crowd had collected.

Hardly was he out of hearing before Joséfa, in an outburst of enthusiasm and that childlike confidence characterizing her conversations with the Priest, exclaimed:

"O Padre, it is he; it is he!"

"What meanest thou?" queried Father Clement.

"Why, the prince whom you said I might meet today."

The Jesuit shook his head dubiously, but Joséfa was not to be disenchanted without protest, and puckering her lips into a pretty pout she sidled close to the elderly man, saying:

"If he is not the prince, perhaps he is the angel that nurse Chona believes will come from the sunrise land to be a redeemer; what think you?"

"That old Chona is half-heathen, more Aztec than Catholic. An angel indeed! *Tiens!* He looks too English!" And the Frenchman shrugged his shoulders with the contemptuous expression of that doubter who questioned the possibility of any good thing coming out of Nazareth.

CHAPTER II

A PLUME AND RAPIER EXCHANGE OWNERS

A motley throng had collected on the plain west of the stream San Pedro, awaiting the racing.

The idlest and most eager of the spectators had equal choice in selecting a favorable site for witnessing the riding, for between the children of the prairie the Prairie makes no difference, offering to all alike the vantage ground of ample space.

The noisy Mexicans, in broad-brimmed conical sombreros, short jackets, bright sashes and slashed breeches, were in marked contrast to the stoical Comanches, bedecked with paint and feathers. Gaily dressed *caballeros* on gaudily caparisoned steeds showily cantered about, much to the satisfaction of their own vanity; while on the outskirts of the crowd, quietly resting their horses, were the Americans, severely plain in suits of buckskin.

The marshal on this occasion was Don Ramon Urrea, Joséfa's uncle, by far the most richly dressed *caballero* on the grounds. Already, with the self-importance of his conspicuous position, he was forming the equestrians into a column three abreast, giving the preferment to his aristocratic friends; while next to them were positioned the Mexicans; and then the Indians; leaving the Americans to fall in rank at the rear.

At a given signal a Mexican lad threw a glove to the ground, at which each rider, in his turn, made a hundred-yard dash to pick it up. A spear was next laid down, this contest being limited to those who had been fortunate enough to have secured the glove. Fewer yet were the successful, for oftentimes an Indian pony shied at the sunlight on the spear, swerving as from a serpent; while the fiery mustangs hurried by with such rapidity that even a Mexican could not always snatch it. The Americans, although they rode well, equaled neither in agility nor dexterity the other contestants. The final contest rested between a Mexican and a Comanche. To the former was awarded a fine dagger, much to the chagrin of the Indian, whose immobility of countenance would not have betrayed him but for the covetous glance of his snakey eye.

"Look!" exclaimed Father Clement to Joséfa; "how beautifully the savage bears his defeat. Whatever he may feel he has smothered in his breast, when none of the other riders would have done so; he is the real victor!"

Loud acclamations of applause burst from the crowd at the Mexican's success.

"It takes a fine rider," said an onlooker, "to beat a Comanche."

"Aye," assented another, "for their horsemanship is wonderful, and of all the copper-colored devils in that tribe, Big Terrapin is the best rider."

"And the meanest Indian," declared a voice with a German accent, for it was none other than Baron de Bastrop's; and turning to Charles Dabney, in whom he recognized a stranger, he continued:

"'Twas before your day the last time the Comanches tried to wipe out this little settlement, way back in the early twenties, when I was *alcalde*; but we who experienced it will never forget that night. A blacker night I never saw. The red devils crept upon the sentinels like panthers and soon silenced them. Then leaping from house to house with tomahawk in hand, committed deeds such as only savages could have planned. The shrieks of the women, the cries of the children and the bloodcurdling war-whoop still echo in my ears—and Big Terrapin was the ringleader.'

"He's a big Injun," interrupted a backwoodsman; "a big brave. I've hearn tell how nobody can kill him, ain't you, Smith?"

The trapper addressed did not seem to hear the question, for he was looking another way.

"You might as well talk to a stone as to Deaf Smith," some one remarked.

"He can hear Henry Karnes all right, if he can see his mouth, for we've trapped too much together not to understand each other." And catching Smith's eye the question was repeated in a voice so soft that it bordered on effeminacy. This time Deaf Smith nodded his head corroboratively as he answered:

"Yip, that's true. They tell me no arrow or bullet can pierce his hide and that's howcome folks gin him the name of Terrapin. Whatever hits him flies off like his skin was a shell."

"And among other tribes," interrupted trapper Karnes, "like the Apaches, Lipans and Campeachys, they is skeart of the very name o' Terrapin. Their

medicine men swar he's a charmed life, and tell how at the sun-dance, when a buck, his bravery and grit was sich as their oldest warriors had never seen."

Here the talk ceased, as a diversity of entertainment distracted their attention. At Don Ramon's command a bull's-eye target was set up and marksmanship was tested with horses at full speed. Some of the Indians used bows, sitting erect on bareback horses, while others, swinging to their ponies' sides, shot pistols under their necks, hitting the mark with wonderful accuracy. The Mexicans were not to be outdone, for they dismounted and remounted their flying mustangs and then fired with the assurance of success born only with prolonged practice. The American, though achieving no such circus feats, leveled his rifle and shot with unerring aim, winning the grudging admiration of even the proud *caballéros*.

It was the American, who, after many ties, received the brace of pistols in acknowledgment of his skill.

Charles Dabney, watching from horseback the success of his compatriot, cheered lustily and long at this decision; so that Don Ramon, noting his enthusiasm, turned to his friend Castrillo, saying:

"*Caramba!* Who in the devil is he?"

"An *Americano* that can hold his own in a fight, I should say, though I have never seen him before."

The day was to close with a gala event, a result of a challenge between the acknowledged best Mexican and Indian riders.

Two blindfolded horses, never ridden before, were half driven and dragged, sulking and plunging, from a nearby corral. The sight was now an interesting and anxious one, riveting all eyes in eager expectancy. The Mexican had the choice of the horses. He picked the larger animal, a black of considerable size, and to all appearances strong; while the other, a piebald mustang, was left to the Indian.

The Comanche surveyed him with a feeling of pride, for looking at his high withers he felt sure he could sit him well. Though not as tall as the black, his neck resembled a game-cock's and his ears were small, fine and pointed. Stepping to his side, Big Terrapin sought with caresses to gentle him. Placing his hand on the mustang's nose, he patted him. At first the horse neighed, dilating wide his big nostrils, but soon stopped and began sniffing the air, as if smelling the Indian, for a Comanche can be trusted to make friends with a horse like a beggar will with a dog. After stroking his coarse, rough mane, he next whispered in the animal's ear. What he said no one except the horse heard, but perhaps it was an assurance to the dumb animal that he too was a fellow-creature of the plain. The horse soon stopped quivering, and seemingly less frightened, forthwith allowed Big Terrapin to mount, for bare-back the Indian preferred to ride.

It was the Mexican's wish, however, to use a saddle, to which his horse was violently opposed. Despite kicking, rearing and chafing, after laborious effort the girth was cinched securely, while the black vented his fury in snorts of defiance. Mounting him proved as great a difficulty. How long he could

keep his saddle, the riskiest bettor would scarce have ventured to predict. As soon as it was feasible the bandages were removed from the horses' eyes. The piebald, with long, graceful strides, bounded across the plain, the Indian's figure swaying in rhythm with every motion, so that man and beast seemed blended into a centaur.

With the Mexican it was different. Though he urged on his steed with quirt and spur, it was to no avail, for after the first tremendous plunge the animal stopped short and began to pitch and rear. With ears pressed close to his head the black suddenly ran forward and let shower a torrent of kicks. Failing to unseat the Mexican, he commenced to buck most violently. Tugging doggedly on the heavy Spanish bit he finally got his head between his forelegs and then seesawed, rearing and kicking high and twisting in midair, trying to tear the rider off by the leg, biting at it viciously. In spite of dig of spur, volley of blows rained on by quirt, the severe jerks and yanks on the cruel bit, soon the black refused to go, though flecked with foam and blood.

The mottled mustang, meanwhile, had made a good beginning and seemed likely to make a good ending, for the Indian had mastered his steed and toward the goal they sped, when an accident occurred as unavoidable as it was unseen.

One of the platitudes of the prairie is, "Nobody but a fool or a stranger ever predicts the weather in Texas." Hence this day, that had dawned bright and mild, had now grown gray and windy. The Comanche turned his head as he flew by the line

of spectators, attracted by their laughter at the bucking broncho. Just as he did so, a flurry of wind took Joséfa's hat off, blowing it directly in front of his mustang's feet, causing him to shy and jump. The Comanche was thrown violently, so unexpected and quick were the wild animal's movements, whose speed never slackened; on the contrary, feeling no restraining influence, his gait increased and he was fast disappearing in the distance when Big Terrapin, slightly stunned, scrambled unsteadily to his feet. Casting his eyes after the runaway, he saw to recapture him was hopeless, so picking up the hat lying near, the Indian began looking in the direction of the women for its owner.

Distressed and grieved, Joséfa and the Priest came slowly forward, and as the girl received her hat she pulled out the long white ostrich plume and silently handed it to the Chief; while Father Clement, by looks and gestures rather than words, conveyed some meaning of their sorrow for the accident.

The people realizing the Comanche's skill in the manner he had gentled the mustang, burst forth in cheers, for though the Mexican remained in his saddle, yet all present realized Big Terrapin was really the better horseman.

As soon as opportunity offered itself, Father Clement sought the Chief, not only to compliment his bearing, but also to present him with his rapier of Toledo finish, the like of which the Comanche had never seen.

The crowd was now dispersing. Many of the Mexicans, drunk from *mescal*, rode recklessly along, unheeding the safety of pedestrians. Toward San Antonio Charles Dabney directed his way. Rather to the side of the road he kept, paying little attention to his horse, which had settled into a dog-trot; for if truth be known, he was busily scanning the passers, hoping to catch another glimpse of the beautiful señorita whose hat had brought defeat to the savage. In this he was disappointed, for Father Clement and Joséfa, familiar with the country, had taken a nearer way to the city. By crossing a field they were enabled to cut short the distance by half, reaching the highway where it connected with the main street of San Antonio.

As they neared this point a cloud of dust, together with the rattle of horses' hoofs, announced the coming of a cavalcade. Glancing at them, Joséfa thought at first they were Mexicans racing; but on looking closer she saw the foremost horse was running away. The terror and speed of the frightened animal was increased by the loud and boisterous shouts of the drunken men, urging on their horses in hot pursuit.

The girl was not slow to realize a terrible accident was imminent, and shutting her eyes she nervously clutched the Priest's hand. That the rider's horse was utterly beyond his control would hardly have alarmed Father Clement, for he knew ere long the animal would spend his strength; but the street he was entering was narrow and in it walked a group of people seemingly unconscious of danger. The grown ones, the Jesuit felt, were fully able to

take care of themselves, but for the children he was most anxious. His fears were soon realized, for at that instant he saw the rider, with a momentous jerk, pull back his horse just as his forefeet grazed a little girl whom a man snatched to the safety of his arms.

The horse recoiled upon his haunches, and all might have been well had not the girth broken, sending rider and saddle to the ground with great force.

In his effort to hold the runaway, Dabney, having wrapped the bridle about his hand, gave the horse another jerk when thrown, pulling him backward, so that man and beast rolled on the ground together.

"*Móy hermóssa caballo*, a very fine horse!" sighed an old Mexican, who had come out of his adobe to see what was happening, and whose sympathy was more for the beast than the American.

Joséfa knew something terrible had occurred, though she did not see it, for the Priest shook loose her grasp and hastened to the injured man. His experience in the wars of France had familiarized him with accidents, making him quick to act in emergencies. With gentle hands he examined the sufferer, informing the bystanders that unless internally injured a broken leg was the worst result he could discover.

In the group of onlookers were Captain and Mrs. Dickinson, whose little daughter was the innocent cause of the accident.

"He is a stranger," the Priest remarked.

"And an American," observed Captain Dickinson; adding, "Sue, we must take him to our home."

"Yes," she sobbed, "that we may nurse him, for he risked his life to save our child."

A stretcher was soon improvised, and among those helping to carry the stranger were the Captain and the Priest. With Mrs. Dickinson and the little daughter, followed Joséfa, weeping bitterly, for the blood that gushed from Dabney's nose when he fell still covered his face, making him a gory spectacle.

The trying ordeal of having his leg set the Virginian bore with a courageous calmness surprising to the Frenchman, who acted as surgeon. When this was done the sufferer was given a tea of herbs, both stimulating and soothing. His sighs gradually gave way and even breathing denoted that he had fallen in a deep sleep, indicative not so much of exhaustion as that he rested comfortably. The Jesuit remained with him all that night, but Joséfa did not linger at the Dickinson cabin, for there was nothing she could do. To the restful quietude of her adobe she hastened, to throw herself into old Chona's motherly arms and pour into her willing ears all the happenings of that eventful day. Long hours these two talked, with the blessed assurance of not being disturbed, for Don Ramon, the *caballero*, the bacchanalian, returned not to his home that night.

CHAPTER III

A FRIENDSHIP IS FORMED

During the time the Virginian's limb forced him to remain indoors, frequently Joséfa, with the Priest or old Chona, visited the Dickinson cabin, and between her and Mother Dickinson a friendship was developing that was to prove a bulwark of strength in the future. With Dabney, too, she had become acquainted in a shy, gazelle-like way. Large bunches of flowers and luscious fruits she would often bring, the like of which the sick man had never seen.

It gave the Virginian a peculiar pleasure to look upon her gifts, especially the flowers; no richer or redder were they than Joséfa's own bright lips nor more velvety than the damask of her soft, clear, olive skin. The perfume they imparted to the room was languorous with the languor pervading the atmosphere of San Antonio—the languor of honey-filled flowers and the droning of bees. The pervasion of perfume which the air wafted, gentle as a caress, filled the sick-room. Streaming through the doorway and window it came, even percolating the chinks in the logs. Nature was typifying conditions. It was an object lesson of the great truth time was teaching: The blending of the sweet with

the useful; the welding of the sentimental with the essential. The aroma, the odor, and presence of flowers made the cabin more attractive, giving that home touch without which a palace differs little from a hovel.

True, the cabin was clean and comfortable. The bed, chairs and table, though of plain material, fashioned by a rude mechanic, harmonized with the house. The puncheon floor, smooth and white, bespoke the industry of the housewife, while the skill of the sportsman was indicated by three monstrous antlers serving as a rifle-rack that hung above the mantel-shelf.

Near the fireplace was spread the skin of an antelope, dappled and slick. On the hearthstone, always ready, set a coffeepot, the Texan's luxury—without which no welcome was ever deemed complete.

Yet Mother Dickinson sitting there with her knitting, as well as Dabney, felt the influence of Joséfa's flowers. They added the right touch of color, breathing the tenderness of thought and of sentiment, so that the frontierswoman kept time to the click of her needles by humming a snatch from an old love tune that she had not sung in years.

Captain Dickinson also felt their spell, and the influence made him reminiscent. Tilting back his chair so as to better stretch his long limbs, he opened his mouth as if to yawn, but a sigh slipped forth instead. Then locking his rough, sinewy fingers behind his head, he half-closed his eyes dreamily and began:

"I was jist waiting for that little Mexican gal to go home to tell you all about her—seeing her and

Father Clement have shown themselves so friendly. I always felt kinder sorry for her some way, maybe 'cause that uncle of hers is sich a darn rascal; maybe 'cause she ain't got no dad of her own; and maybe 'cause she's so pretty with them big black eyes always shining with fun.

"I reckon how 'tain't likely you've ever heard how her daddy got killed, being as you are a stranger and it happened so long ago. You see I recollect it well, 'cause 'twas when I fust come 'bout here and was new to the country—so natur'lly it made a great impression. 'Twas the fust time, too, I ever saw Jim Bowie, though I'd heard 'nough of him, and I b'lieve all I heard when I saw him kill that old Spaniard dead as a herring."

Here the speaker shifted his quid of tobacco before resuming. "The Mexicans had jist finished one of their ditches, *acéquias* they call 'em,, and were having a *fiésta*. They are forever having *fiésta*s. Well, the padre had blessed the water and they had planted cactus 'longside the ditch to keep off the cattle. Then all hands that had helped, either by money or work, went to the *Suerte*, which wa'n't nothin' more nor less than a lottery for 'em to draw lots for the ownership of the land watered by the ditch. Now, if 'tis anything these Mexicans hate, 'tis to see the Americans getting a foothold, for it hurts 'em worse to give up this land than it does us to part with our scalps. Well, 'fore anybody knew what was brewing, hot words had passed 'twixt Bowie and the old Don. The Spaniard was a blue-blood and a famous swordsman, but he met his match that day, and though I saw it with my own

eyes, it beats me to tell how it was done. The men used knives, sir, and fought with their left hands tied together. Bowie jist somehow jerked back, and shielding his breast with his tied arm, lunged with all his strength against the Spaniard, burying his knife in his heart. The man dropped without uttering a sound; and cool as a cucumber, Bowie cut the thong that bound him to the corpse, wiped the blood from his knife, and putting it in the sheath, said. 'Damn it! one of us had to die and it might as well been him!' That was all, sir, but I never saw the like."

"Did it end there?" Dabney queried.

"Well—yes. Old Urrea had a great following and nothing on God's green earth kept 'em from tearing Bowie to pieces but his Mexican wife. She was the Governor's daughter and that saved him, along with his own bravery. Folks stand in awe of him, 'cause he don't know what fear means; but he's open as the day. You may have heard him spoken of as a ruffian and a drunkard, which is all a black lie. These are times that make men reckless, but Jim Bowie's heart is in the right place and there ain't a gentler man living, especially to women-folks.

"The old Spaniard, Urrea, didn't leave but one child, that little gal, Joséfa; and when Bowie heard how he had made her an orphan it most broke his heart. She's certainly grown into a beauty, and the old Priest looks after her. I lay you never met a mixture like him before—mild as a May morn but sharp as a steel trap. I ain't much on priests nor preaching; but Father Clement—well, he's differ-

ent somehow, and I b'lieve if I knew he would say a mass for my soul it would make me rest easier down in my grave."

The frontiersman shot a quick, furtive glance around the room, as if ashamed of having voiced this thought; then completely changing his tone, continued:

"Soon as you git well enough, I want to take you over to the fort to see Bowie and the boys. I myself am one of the garrison. You know we Americans have been in possession of the Alamo ever since that night when old Ben Milam led us into San 'Tone. That was a hard fight, a five days' fight, and these old streets ran with blood; but it showed the Mexicans we wa'nt going to knuckle under to their tyranny—and now that we've got possession of the Alamo, we'll see snowing in hell before we'll give it up again to the damn Greasers."

Arising, Dickinson crossed the room, took a gourd full of water from the bucket, stepped to the door, rinsed out his mouth, quaffed a draught, whistled for Clinch, and with the dog close at his heels, left the cabin.

Other matters claiming Father Clement's time, it happened several days elapsed without Dabney's seeing him, so that the invalid grew restless for his coming, and when the Priest entered the Dickinson cabin the Virginian's face mirrored the joy he felt.

"You are fast mending, monsieur; far better do I find you," was Father Clement's greeting.

"How do you know?" laughingly asked Dabney.

"Because you are smiling," quickly came the answer; "for the really sick in mind or body seldom

laugh—whereby a smile means much,” continued the Jesuit, and seating himself by the bedside he took Dabney’s hand to feel his pulse, although the Virginian knew it not. “Methinks,” he added, “had it been my privilege to ask from *mon Dieu* a blessing, I would not have had the wisdom of the Hebrew king to have desired more—but I should have coveted the blessing to make people happy, to have made them laugh, for jesters have their place in the world as well as Solomons and they are often more popular,” affirmed the Priest, as if he knew whereof he spoke.

When a broken limb makes a man helpless for weeks it is a gratification to have any one stop to inquire how he fares; but when the caller is a congenial soul, who, besides cheering words of comfort, brings within the sick-room a refreshing breath of the outside world, the visit is in truth a benediction.

The friends of the Dickinsons who came to ask after Dabney did not interest him as did the Priest. Father Clement, although he might not have acknowledged it, also soon ceased to look upon his ministrations to the Virginian in the light of the good Samaritan, having grown interested in him as an individual; for kindred tastes and intelligence can forge more binding friendships than all the links of uncongenial goodness. Yet one great barrier stood in the way—Dabney’s English appearance; for Father Clement had a prejudice against the English dating back to Waterloo. And as the weeks slipped by, bringing the two nearer together with that intimacy born of a longer knowledge, the

Priest made bold to mention this prejudice. The Virginian's reply was a pleasant surprise, for he told how his forebears had crossed the Channel with William the Norman, and the Frenchman hearing this felt pleased, remembering that meant a victory for France, for France over England. His eyes brightened as the young man proceeded to relate, with that knowledge of family history characteristic of Virginians, that in those old days, as their shields in Battle Abbey showed, the name was not spelled Dabney but Daubigney. Hearing this the Priest arose, and seizing the speaker's hand shook it with a hearty grasp, as if being introduced to another creature, for though Dabney might look English, yet his blood flowed from a French fountain-head, making Father Clement eager to hail him as a compatriot in that wild prairie country so far from his native land.

This would have been all sufficient had the narrator stopped then and there—the Priest was his friend for life; but other things remained to be told and Dabney saw fit to tell them; how at Mount Vernon his grandmother had smiled and courtesied to her partner, General Lafayette, while from the harpsichord sounded the measures of the stately minuet.

The Frenchman had grown very much interested, and when Dabney told that his grandmother had held in her own hand the key to the Bastille, presented to Washington by the admiring Lafayette, he became wildly excited.

"It all seems impossible!" he exclaimed. "To have known the immortal Lafayette and to have

seen with one's own eyes the key to the Bastile! More interesting than a letter from home do I find you, Monsieur Daubigny. And this good George Washington with his two little stepchildren reminds me of Napoleon and Hortense and Eugene. How rejoiced I am Washington licked the British, though it behooves me not as a priest to say so, yet I feel it in truth." And the elderly man laughed as he added: "Now, I will make you a little confession, for I am trying to work out my absolution. Father Clement is a priest, but the old Adam was a soldier born. When the wars of France closed I enlisted with the Church militant and now I am trying to conquer myself. But it is a great struggle for which I sought the wilderness, and lo! Providence directed my steps here. It is easy though to say 'Thy will be done' in a land like this; for Texas, with its mild climate and mellow skies, reminds me of my own beautiful France.

"It is also pleasant to recall," the Priest continued, "the *fleur-de-lis*, that emblem of the Trinity, was the first flag ever to float over this prairie country, because like baptizing a new-born babe it was started aright."

"But," supplemented Dabney, "the trail of the serpent now covers the land."

"As it does all lands," agreed the Jesuit. And purposely misconstruing Dabney's remark, added: "The serpent escorted man out of Eden, and ever since has been his steadfast attendant."

"I was thinking of the Mexican emblem—the serpent," explained Dabney.

"It takes a wise man," declared Father Clement, "to think to himself."

Then tightly compressing his lips, the Jesuit looked out of the window, to give the Virginian opportunity to digest the rebuke; not that the Priest was angry, but such was his way.

Dabney had taken deep root in his affections, for these two men met on the plane of having known a higher and different life—hence could talk to each other with an assurance of appreciation such as could not be vouchsafed of any other in San Antonio. Starvation for society such as the Virginian's the Jesuit had often felt, and now that Dabney could supply it, the Frenchman accepted him at his face value. Still, Father Clement was human, and so that curiosity common to all flesh made him long to know the secret of Dabney's soul. That his taste was not that of an adventurer nor an ascetic the discerning Frenchman was confident, his experience as a priest having made him shrewd in reading human nature. He felt certain some secret caused the stranger's coming into their frontier life. Precisely what it was he could not guess, and though Father Clement had tried, yet never had he succeeded in eliciting from the Virginian any reason for his being in Texas.

The invalid had often spoken of his home; of the patriarchal feeling existing between the manor-house and the quarters; also of his college days in old Williamsburg; but never a word or hint was dropped that would serve as a clue for his migration. The Jesuit, however, was man of the world enough to appreciate that no one with Dabney's dis-

position sought the desert without a motive. The more he grew to love him, the greater became his interest; for it grieved the Frenchman to think there was a niche in the Virginian's heart too sacred for his eyes to see. Besides these yearnings of friendship, Father Clement felt the solicitude of a priest. Might not that recess veiled by silence contain some idol which would do the man eternal injury, in that already it had made him an exile? was a question over which the Priest pondered, until his jealousy for Dabney's welfare and happiness was so aroused he determined to settle it once for all.

"How do you like this new country, now that you are well enough to glean from your own observation some knowledge of our frontier life?" he asked.

"Fairly well," was the Virginian's laconic reply; which brevity was not displeasing to the Frenchman, who wished to paddle the conversation to the drift of his own thoughts.

"You know," the Jesuit continued, "there is a maxim that says, 'Coming to Texas means changing one's name.' Now, for instance, you *mon ami*, are styled Monsieur Daubigny." The Priest laughed lightly, then ruminated:

"Texas, Texas is a curious word. Tradition tells when the earliest whites came to this land the Indians in welcome hailed them as 'Tehias, Tehias,' which meant 'Friends, Friends.' It is a beautiful legend, for still the land gives the same greeting to newcomers; so that I have likened it myself to the Cave of Adullam, for to Texas seem to flock the disappointed, the discontented, the unhappy—" Father Clement paused before continuing:

"It is a blessing that God's confines hold space for such as these, where under the influence of eternal sunshine and the warming comradeship of fellow-feeling a better life may be possible, for there is goodness and greatness inborn in every breast, as the soul is a spark of celestial fire."

The Virginian's attitude while listening was that of respectful attention, but the Priest dared not pry further, for there was something in Dabney's expression that froze inquisitiveness.

In his anxiety to dispel any chilliness that his remarks might have engendered, Father Clement broke the silence by pointing to a pioneer who chanced to be passing. The twilight's indistinct haze prevented the Jesuit from recognizing him as Deaf Smith, so that he referred to him as a type rather than a character.

"Look!" said the Priest, "there goes one of the world's wonders—the pioneer. Rough, tough, and weather-stained, he is the living bulwark of strength between the settler and the Indian. With one foot on civilization and one on savagery, the pioneer stands like the Colossus of Rhodes,, spanning a space through which the tide of progress passes. The dangers of the plain, the hardships of the forest are the pleasures of his existence and the conquest of the wilderness will be his victory, though his only crown is a coon-skin cap."

The Jesuit saw now the opportunity of sending another shaft, and so turning to Dabney he added:

"Pardon me, perhaps I weary you. It may be you do not share my enthusiastic admiration for

these sturdy beings whose lives so differ from our own."

The Virginian, however, was not to be surprised into a confession. With that subtlety which amused while it baffled the Priest, he replied :

"When I was a boy tales of Indian hunters interested me more than 'all Gaul or any of the three parts.' I was a youth then—I am a man now; the reality of life scarcely bears out the imagery of our dreams."

"No," replied Father Clement, "but experience, though a nightmare, is better than mere dreaming, at least in the development of character. You, Monsieur Daubigny, have not the pioneer nature; for if you had, though circumstances might have prevented its development, as long as life lasted within your breast, like Memnon's cry to the sun, there would have been the call of the forest. Every fibre within your nature would have responded like an Æolian harp to whiffs from the wilderness."

The Frenchman had become enthused—his eyes sparkled; the firm lines about his mouth relaxed; the preaching instinct was paramount and urged him on. With the pioneer as his text and Dabney as his congregation, he sermonized, a thing of which he was seldom guilty, for Father Clement lived his religion instead of hawking it; but this was a grand sermon, a tremendous theme—humanity in touch with nature,—and the Priest spoke as one knowing Nature's God, and Dabney, listening, had to bite his lip to still its quiver.

"The same desires," said Father Clement in conclusion, "that have blossomed into the pioneer of

our era will always dwell in the human heart. It is the unsatisfied longing for something different—the cry of the spirit for that better country that lies beyond.” With a deep-drawn sigh he stopped, for the mist had risen to his eyes, and he spoke as one who views the future from the vantage ground of a lofty life. His listener sighed also, for being younger he had not ascended above the clouds of his past and the way ahead seemed hard and narrow and lonely; but he did not give vent to his feelings, for fear of the Priest’s sympathy, as only the weak desire to be coddled.

CHAPTER IV

THE MUSIC OF GUITAR

When Charles Dabney left Virginia for Texas, "a wild country teeming with buffalo and Indian" would have been the most definite description he could have given of his destination. This his imagination had pictured, but never had he conceived any idea of the Spanish civilization to which he was journeying, differing so materially from the life in the States. All about him seemed strange and unreal, and the Virginian was often tempted to stretch forth his hand to see if this new world were really tangible and not the imagery of a fevered dream.

Thanks to a vigorous constitution and the Priest's care, Dabney was now able to go wherever he chose. Father Clement frequently accompanied him and the Virginian felt his friendship a compliment.

One evening, as the two halted to watch the dancing on the Plaza de las Islas, a Mexican beauty, with the coquetry of her race, snapped her castanet in Dabney's face as she invited him to step the *cachuca* with her. He smiled, shook his head, and turning to the Priest, inquired her name. Father Clement was laughing.

"I do not know, but be who she may, you have offended her—I fancy her invitation was the result

of a wager. *Tiens!* with your three legs you would cut quite a figure!" And the Priest, now shaking with mirth, tapped the cane that Dabney was still obliged to use when walking.

As they sauntered off the Virginian said:

"Monsieur le curé," for thus he always addressed the Priest, "what do you think of women?"

"I have thought very seldom of them," answered the Jesuit, "for wars not women occupied my youth—and when a man grows old he desires peace." Whereat the celibate shrugged his shoulders and laughed to himself a low, amused laugh, then having indulged his humor, continued:

"The generalization is harmless, the individuals—well, there are different types, worldlings like Cleopatra and Pompadour and saints such as Esther and Joan of Arc. They are pleasant to reflect upon, but like dreams of empire, hard work to win."

Father Clement sighed as he finished, for at that moment his eyes fell upon Joséfa, who was seated in the arcade of Don Ramon's adobe, thrumming her guitar.

Seeing them, she arose quickly and came to meet them, welcoming her godfather with a kiss, and greeting Dabney in a shy though cordial way.

Soon the evening meal was served; there was a carafe of *mescal*, hot *tamales*, a dish of *frijoles*, and a large bowl steaming with *chili-con-carne*, besides a pot of black coffee and a *bota* of white wine.

The aroma from these Mexican dishes appealed to the Virginian's sense of smell stronger than the food did to his taste, though his appetite was hearty and he was not an epicurean, for it was not

hard to relish what was set before him when Joséfa's presence graced the board.

Don Ramon's manner to his visitors was that of a grandee. He did not like either of them, for intuitively he felt them his superiors and the knowledge made him jealous. But he did not show it, for Spanish-Mexican that he was, the veneer of politeness was sufficiently thick to cover the surliness frequently felt. He proffered Dabney his jeweled snuff-box when he would preferably have given him his knife, for he was obnoxious to him—being an *Americano*, that was enough.

The respect accorded Father Clement was due not so much to the fact of his being a priest as that Ramon Urrea was dominated by realizing the mettle of the man. This tacit truth Dabney soon perceived and the knowledge made him watchful. It happened that whenever the Spaniard found the Virginian at his adobe the Priest was there also, to engage his attention by discussing the affairs in Bexar and other troublous questions of those turbulent days. That these conversations ended good-humoredly was due to the Frenchman's wit and his power to keep a clear head. Their whisperings, nevertheless, came to the Virginian's ear like muttering of volcanic action, convincing him that beneath the exterior of San Antonio there was lava of hard feeling and molten hatred toward the Americans, likely to burst forth at any time.

Ramon Urrea, engrossed as he was with affairs of state, never suspected the probability of his niece giving her affections to one of the despised strangers, one of the heretic *gringos*. His duties keeping

him busy, he had little idea how much of his time Dabney spent with Joséfa, for had he known, the Virginian's visits would certainly have been prohibited.

As for Father Clement—well, possibly his autumn feelings made him forgetful of the spring-time of his heart. Besides, the Jesuit had made it a rule in life never to meddle unless thereby good was to result.

Joséfa, knowing Father Clement as she did, could easily see how the stranger had grown in his regard; but she could not have defined the magnetism attracting them any more than she could have explained the affinity of souls. It simply seemed natural to her that it was so. In that dim, half-awakened consciousness of womanhood, the señorita began vaguely to realize the power of Dabney's presence; and with it came a greater knowledge of the loveliness of life, proportionately as this overwhelming force stirred her inmost soul. Dreams of happiness, hope and love spread their wings, fluttering about her heart, while her being thrilled in unison to the music of their meaning.

The rapturous blushes in her cheeks might have warned Dabney of her ripening affection, but he little dreamed that, to herself, Joséfa already called him "Carlos" and that his most trivial sayings were cherished by the señorita; for, accustomed as the Virginian was to that shadowy form of chivalry which casts compliments to women, it came natural to him to make pretty speeches. He little realized conditions of society in that colony of Latin blood interpreted as serious what by him were regarded

as meaningless nothings, mere sap from the tongue of a cavalier scion.

So the custom came for Dabney to spend his evenings with her, when Joséfa, playing on her guitar, would sing him love songs. Her music strangely soothed the man, as if exorcising a spirit in his breast. Was it the spirit that hallowed the niche impenetrable to the Jesuit's scrutiny? Be that as it may, these strains of love, vibrating with unutterable fascination, took Dabney from out of the shadowy past that to him was still a living issue, for the secret of his life oppressed him with the bitterness of unavailing regret.

The harmony of these Spanish songs, every cadence of which trembled with passion, enraptured him like the wild beast following Orpheus, until the discordant world of life, light and day seemed undesirable; yet when their echoes dying away left the man oppressed with sadness rather than peace, the presence of Joséfa proved diverting and with diversion came comfort.

Joséfa's feelings for the Virginian differed greatly from his feelings toward her. She was so terribly in earnest, so trusting, so like the child of the southern sun—and he, somehow, was different. The blood in his veins did not course with as rapid pulsations as it did with the señorita. Hers was a gushing torrent; his resembled more a broad, deep river, a river frozen over with ice—a river that it would be hard to change from the channel of the past. Joséfa, though, singing to her guitar, thought only of the music of the present. She was young, she was pretty, she was lovable; and combined with the

charm of her naturalness was an air of thorough breeding, inherited from her Canary Island ancestry.

Like others whose companions have been mostly ideals, the señorita's opinions of life, though somewhat shaped by Father Clement's influence, were largely tinted with the colorings of her own imagination.

Dabney enjoyed drawing her out; for looking through her lenses showed the stale old world in a strange new light. He often wondered if the girl were satisfied, living as she did apart from the social life of San Antonio. He determined to find out. They were seated in the *patio*, now a bower of beauty, with rose vines climbing the yellow walls of the adobe, and the shade of palm and pomegranate making the spot sweet and cool. Taking the señorita's hand in his—he had never held it before, and she blushed conspicuously—he asked:

"If it were your choice, which would you rather be, Joséfa, a lovely rose twined with others in a garland to ornament a *fiesta*, or a pure white jessamine, wasting its perfume while fading unplucked and unappreciated? Think now, which would you rather be?"

For a moment the girl paused before answering:

"The rose would not last long before being trampled in the dust, while the jessamine would turn ugly with age. Then with her big black eyes looking straight into his, she added: "Neither of their fates would I choose. I would prefer being like the lovely lily that is placed at the feet of Our Lady."

"The Blessed Mother herself put that wish into thy heart, my child," supplemented Father Clement, who unobserved had entered. The Priest then gave the Virginian a scrutinizing glance that seemed a challenge. Dabney instantly sprang to his feet, his shoulders and head thrown back, a slight flush mantling his cheeks. It was as if he were facing a judge and must explain himself.

A low sigh escaped the Jesuit as he said:

"Monsieur Daubigny, I will walk home with you; we can talk on the way."

When the street was reached for a while neither spoke—it was as if a wall had suddenly risen between them; then Father Clement began:

"What I wish to say is this—the first love of a young heart is like the blush on a peach, the perfume of a violet. Once destroyed it can never be restored. I have cared for you in sickness, I have treated you as a son; I do not believe you capable of rewarding unkindly an old man, whose only wish in life is the soul's welfare and earthly happiness of his godchild. She is a tender plant, a prairie flower; and she is—my all," concluded the Priest, with a sob. Looking Dabney full in the eye, he added, "I have trusted you in the past, can I trust you in the future?"

"You shall trust me always," fervently the Virginian replied, returning the Priest's gaze with a steadiness that left no doubt of sincerity in the mind of the Jesuit.

And so it followed that though Dabney had reached the Dickinson cabin, where he still lodged, he passed it and the two went on until the Military Plaza came in view. There seated on the sward, in

the quietude of the night, while the stars twinkled above, Charles Dabney unbosomed his heart to the Priest. He told why he had left Virginia, why he had sought the wilderness. He spoke carelessly, with no sign of the struggle it cost him to tell it—but Father Clement knew, he understood. And he gave Daubigny his hand in a clasp that meant more than words, for it held in it the assurance that this confidence would be regarded as sacred as a confession.

CHAPTER V

BREAKERS AHEAD

One morning as Father Clement knelt before the wooden cross he had set up in his sanctum, having just finished his chaplet and being about to rise, his door unexpectedly opened and all breathless Joséfa entered.

The flush on her cheek was due to excitement rather than rapid walking, and in her eyes glistened unshed tears.

"What is the matter, child?" asked the Priest, rising to greet her.

"Oh, everything!" answered the girl as she sank on a mat and buried her face in her hands. Her godfather, leaning over, gently patted her head while awaiting further enlightenment.

Joséfa, thus encouraged, began:

"You see, ever since dear old Chona's death I have felt lonely, for nurse Chona used to comfort me when I was distressed and always took my side in everything. I miss her to tell me what is right."

"My *chiquita*, my little one, thy conscience could tell thee the right if thou wouldst hearken."

"But," interrupted the señorita, "conscience may be lots of company for you priests, but I would rather have the counsel of something living."

"If thy conscience is not alive, forsooth you are in trouble and it is high time you were consulting a priest."

"I do not need an oracle, but a friend," retorted the girl, and seeing how genuine was her grief, Father Clement bade her tell him all.

"Well," began Joséfa, "last evening when Uncle Ramon came home he sent for me and, and"—sobs choked her voice—"told me I had to marry."

"Marry!" exclaimed the Frenchman, as if he could scarcely believe his ears.

"Yes, *marry*."

"Pray, whom?" and there was an irate intonation in the Jesuit's voice.

"Why, his old friend Castrillo, that's old enough to be my father," blurted out the girl, and a fresh attack of weeping made it impossible for her to say more.

The Priest sat silent. A deep rush of blood tinted his hollow cheeks, as if congestion had taken place. His thin lips were compressed until only a purple line marked his mouth. His foot nervously tapped the floor but he did not trust himself to speak. Inwardly a battle raged between the spirit and the flesh, making him long to seize Don Ramon and throttle him as he deserved, but prudence and long self-restraint prevented.

Joséfa, between her sobs, continued:

"I told him that I would not, that I would die first; that I hated Don Castrillo and would murder him sooner than marry him."

She looked at that moment capable of anything. This was not the Joséfa Father Clement had been

accustomed to, but a new woman who could hate as well as love.

"And he laughed me to scorn. 'Pretty talk,' he said, 'to hear from one under my roof.' His wish, he declared, was to be my law, as he stood in the place of my father, and that if I did not obey him he would tell the padre of San Fernando and see that I entered the convent."

The little girl's grief overwhelming her again, she ceased to speak, while her frame shook with emotion.

To contain himself, Father Clement was now pacing the floor. Halting where his godchild sat, he imprinted a kiss on her brow, asking:

"Was that all Ramon Urrea said?"

"O! no. He says such a course had always been intended, and he did not mean for an upstart of a girl to thwart his plans, he who was a soldier. I told him you would not allow it, at which his rage became great and his language most abusive, too foul for me to sully my tongue by repeating. He spurned you, Padre, saying you were not of our race, but a vagabond friar, with no right to meddle in the family affairs of the house of Urrea; adding, moreover, that my father was in his dotage when he gave you shelter and selected you as my sponsor in baptism.

He vowed soon you and your heretic friend Señor Daubigny, as well as all other foreigners, would have no room save a Mexican dungeon in which to air your thoughts; while he and Castrillo would be powers in the land.

Now, Father Clement, I can see how he might contrive to place me in a nunnery, but I do not see how he could put you all in a dungeon, and I told him so. Whereat he jerked his sword from the scabbard, brandishing it above his head, saying, 'Wait and see!' Quite terrified, I made haste to bed, but I cried all night and prayed for the morning to dawn so I could come and tell you all.'

"My child," spoke the Priest, "Don Ramon was most probably deep in his cups, else he would not have spoken as he did."

"He was not more intoxicated than usual," replied Joséfa, adding: "I never knew before that he disliked you, though I have suspected that he hated Señor Daubigny—and why, I can't see."

"Which is not strange, my *chiquita*, my little one, since love is blind, 'tis said." He laughed a little, then changing to a serious tone went on:

"What makes you think Don Ramon dislikes Daubigny?"

"He is an *Americano*, and ever since that night when old Ben Milam surprised the presidio and the *Americanos* got possession of the Alamo, he has hated them one and all."

Then bursting into tears, Joséfa wailed:

"Oh! if dear nurse Chona were only living, dear old Chona who loved me like a mother."

"Perhaps," hinted Father Clement, "as time goes on you may become equally attached to Niña. Isn't she satisfactory as a maid?"

"No, no, no!"

"Why?"

"Because she would rather please Don Ramon than me; and late of evenings, when Chona would have been asleep or telling her beads, Niña sits up awaiting his return, to see if she can serve him."

An inexplicable but intelligent smile came over the Jesuit's face, and though he said nothing, he nodded his head as if he were beginning to understand. But Joséfa did not interpret his silence aright.

"You need not shake your head as if I did not know of what I was speaking, for I daily see them. She is always cooking the dishes he likes, and while he eats she stands by and fans him when I do not believe a fly is within forty miles."

"Potiphar's wife," murmured the Frenchman.

"No, that is not her husband's name. It is Pedrillo and he is a *picador*, and seldom about. I asked her one day if she did not miss him, and she said it was right for him to attend to his business, and that she was blessed in having a good home with a kind master."

"Hush, Joséfa; it is not well to encourage servants to talk and never wise to repeat their gossip. In reference to all that you have been telling me, I think the best thing for you to do is to return to your home, but say nothing of your morning's visit. If Don Ramon ever repeats his avowal to marry you to Juan Castrillo, tell him from me, 'beware;' and now, *adios, my chiquita*."

Standing in the doorway the Priest watched until the señorita's figure became but a dot in the perspective of the old narrow street. No sooner was he left alone than his manner changed, for Father

Clement loved Joséfa with an unfathomable tenderness.

"I would as soon see her at the mercy of a wild beast as wedded to a man she did not love, for happiness is a stranger to a hearthstone where the fire is kindled with a substitute for love. The flames of a passion like Castrillo's would stifle Joséfa like fumes from charcoal, for his heart is as black as the gates of hell!" And a denunciation strangely synonymous to an oath sounded on the air as the Priest turned and entered his house.

He sank on a settle just inside the door; his head drooped, an expression of abject weariness stole over his face, making him look years older. His attitude was one of loneliness, of desolation. His tone as well as his bearing had undergone a great change, for as he talked to himself his voice was soft and almost plaintive. "And my little girl is really a woman," he was saying. "It is hard to realize Joséfa is grown! *Mon Dieu!* how I have loved her—and now the time has come for another's love to be more to her than Père Clement's. It is hard, hard, hard! I was not prepared for it! She has been so much to me—a charge from the dead, sacred and precious; a babe alone in the world with no one to guide her feet aright, those little feet that I taught to walk; but," and the old fire shone in his eyes and his voice rang decisive and strong, "I shall never give her to any but a good man, to one that would love and cherish her, to one that is noble and true, like Monsieur—" The Priest stopped short and clapped his hand over his mouth, for Daubigny stood on the threshold.

CHAPTER VI

SETTLING A SCORE

The clear chimes from the belfry of San Fernando announced the midnight hour and the sentinel's cry, "All's well!" echoed through the silent city as the moon, like a belated chaperone focusing a lorgnette, illumined the courtyard of Don Ramon's adobe.

There two men confronted each other. Close to a pomegranate—from which a mocking-bird a few seconds before, as if cognizant that love was being plighted, had warbled a melody soft, blissful and more rapturous than Mendelssohn's wedding strains—stood a woman.

She was a magnificent creature, tall and well rounded, with that voluptuous beauty frequently met with among the commoner classes of all nationalities—an animal beauty rather than spiritual. An *enagua* or short skirt of red displayed to advantage her bare feet and well-shapen ankles. A thin white bodice, carelessly caught over her breast and girded at the waist with a belt of colored beads, revealed the symmetry of her figure. Her lustrous dark eyes were alight with fear, her rosy lips trembled with nervousness as she listened to the words of Pedrillo, her husband. The light of murder lit up his face with a savagery that sent terror not only to Niña's heart

but to Don Ramon's as well, realizing as he did his helplessness before this armed man, this picador, whose courage could cope with maddened beast.

"I will not kill you, though you deserve it," Pedrillo was saying, "for I owe debts, heavy debts, that must be paid, else I become a bondservant, a peon. So, *caramba!* if Don Ramon will furnish the gold he can have the woman, spawn of vice that she is, and we will call it even; only"—and a laugh, terrible to hear, broke from his lips—"only," he repeated, "the Don gets the worse of the bargain. This is the condition, the sole condition, under which I spare your lives, for devils like you have no right to live."

Niña shivered. Don Ramon, who a few minutes before, intoxicated with delight, had felt like a man drunk with bad wine, now stood crestfallen, great drops of icy sweat beetling his brow, his snakey eyes shining like little black beads in his bloated face as his glance wandered furtively from the woman to her husband. Hardly had Pedrillo finished speaking before he gasped:

"Agreed *in el nombre de Dios*, in the name of God."

"Then," said the picador, "come in your adobe and open your chest, for there is no time like the present to make promises good."

And Ramon Urrea quakingly obeyed, feeling much as did Faust when for Marguerite he bargained his soul to Mephistopheles.

The wind meanwhile had risen, rustling the leaves like gossiping tongues busy with a new secret; and the moon, the tired old moon, that has kept an eye over creation since the days of Eve, snuggled in a

thick black cloud for a little rest. No sooner was the last *peso* of the stipulated sum doled out than Pedrillo left the house. Scarce had the sound of his footsteps died away than a loud knock was heard at the door.

"What fool is abroad so late on a night like this?" asked Don Ramon, thoroughly ill-humored with the world at large.

"Only Father Clement seeking shelter from the storm," came the placid reply.

As the Priest entered a gust of wind and sand blew in so violently that it was not strange the candle sputtered and went out, though Niña passed it as she glided stealthily behind a curtain and disappeared.

"Alone, Don Ramon?" commented the Jesuit. "I thought I heard voices; but perhaps it was only the wind."

Paying no heed to the uncordial reception, Father Clement laid his hat and cane on the table, thereby showing his intention to remain. Eyeing the Spaniard intently, as he made a light, the Frenchman said:

"A mission of mercy brought me out tonight—a poor ignorant fellow, far from the folds of the Church, has had the misfortune to lose his wife. Fears lest the frailty of his human nature could not bear this awful trial, and perhaps might commit wrong, made me anxious to be near him. He was in a terrible way—his heart was embittered, his feelings overstrung. The blow has blighted what little conception of right his poor warped conscience had, and from my heart I pity him, for it is a terrible loss

to lose a wife, but not irreparable, like for instance—losing faith in woman.’

As no comment was vouchsafed, the Jesuit continued:

“This is a bad night and few people, I am thankful to say, seemed abroad. I only passed one man in crossing the Plaza de las Islas, and that was Pedrillo, the picador.’

Don Ramon still sat silent. A scowl was gathering between his heavy brows. His disquietude did not escape Father Clement, who talked on:

“Pedrillo was jingling a bag of money, so I cautioned him to beware of ladrones; but he muttered something rather philosophical, though a little irrelevant, about wealth’s not being the greatest treasure one could possess, although it could buy one’s way out of purgatory, a sophistry I saw fit to correct, so I said, ‘Money can not buy a passport to heaven, though by it one often enters hell.’ But to return to what I was saying. It seems a man owed his life to Pedrillo, and gave him the gold as a compensation. A great necessity, doubtless, compelled the picador to seek the settlement of a claim like this or he would not have been out so late. Perhaps through Niña you have already heard about it, and as the night wanes and I see you are weary, we had best try to catch a wink of sleep.

“But before we commend our consciences to slumber you will indulge me in my usual habit of reading a few words from Holy Writ, just a little tonic to make rest sweet and dreams less fitful.”

Taking from his cassock a little Bible, the Priest moved the candle to aid him in seeing not only his breviary but the Don's face; then he read:

" 'And it came to pass in an evening, that David arose from his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house; and from the roof he saw a woman—and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

" 'And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers and took her. But the thing that David did displeased the Lord.

" 'And the Lord sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich and the other poor.

" 'And the rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb—And there came a traveler unto the rich man and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but he took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come unto him.

" 'And Nathan said to David' (here Father Clement, lifting his eyes from the page, looked straight into Don Ramon's face, and repeated slowly, deliberately) 'And Nathan said to David, *Thou art the man.*'"

The Spaniard was biting his moustache. Rage coagulated his blood so that his face looked mottled. The lash of the Jesuit had touched a sore spot, which he chafed to resent, but realized that thereby he would be making a confession; so he removed his

hand from his knife-haft, completely cowed by Father Clement's calm, unflinching, spiritual courage.

And the Priest, with no word of comment, bade the Don good-night.

CHAPTER VII

HER CONFIDENCE

The westering sun was nearing its journey's end as Joséfa bade Mother Dickinson good-by and started home across the plaza. Fearing lest something befall her, the girl was rather inclined to run, for she could hear footsteps quickly following, and a glance backward showed the figure of a man rapidly drawing near.

Her relief was great when the welcome voice of Charles Dabney sounded on the air.

"*Buenas tardes!*" he called, and as he placed himself at her side he threw away his half-finished *cigaretto*, saying:

"Señorita, I do believe you were running from me."

"I was," gasped Joséfa; coyly adding, "because, well, because I did not recognize you."

Dabney thought he had never seen her looking so lovely.

"I am sorry," he said, "to have frightened you; so if you are homeward bound I shall try to make up for it by taking care of you the rest of the way; that is, of course, with your permission?"

Her smile was grateful as she said:

"Thank you, for it is growing dusk and I never should stay out so late alone; but Mother Dickinson and I had so much to talk of that I did not realize how the hours passed." She did not tell that he had been the subject of their conversation. "Niña should have come for me," she added petulantly.

"Niña," Dabney repeated; "she is your new servant, I believe. Well, she is far more agreeable to look upon than that old *mestiza* you used to have." His mind went back to the evening on the plaza when Niña, then unknown, had snapped her castanet in his face, begging him to dance with her.

"Niña may be pretty," agreed Joséfa, "but then nurse Chona loved me, so I never thought her homely."

"Do you invest people who admire you with the attractions they may lack?" Dabney asked mischievously.

"Not always."

"For if you did," he continued, "proportionately you might exaggerate me into quite an Adonis."

The girl flushed crimson as she replied:

"You do not need my clemency as dear old Chona did, for, señor, you are already handsome."

She was so truthful that to Dabney, who was skilful with his tongue, she furnished meagre sport in parrying compliments. Coloring slightly he bit his lip. That Joséfa admired him the American had long since known. Had she done so less, the man told his head that he would have found her more attractive, for he held to the tenet that a blessing that comes without effort lacks the witchery of suspense. Joséfa's white purity, however, her childish

frankness, though it at first amused, secretly flattered Dabney. It touched the chivalrous in his nature and awoke a feeling for her that he himself could not have defined, being as yet unaware of it.

"So Niña does not fill old Chona's place in your affections," was his next remark, made solely for the lack of something better to say.

"No," replied Joséfa, "I think her detestable; but then she is not my servant, but Uncle Ramon's, and I think him detestable too." And a great sob filled her voice.

With that good breeding that regards family confidences as sacred, Dabney began to feel embarrassed. He had never before seen Joséfa weep and the sight of her tears moved him strangely. She was so young—such a child—he longed to kiss away the tears trickling down her cheeks, her cheeks that were as red as poppies and smooth as floss satin. The girl was speaking again:

"Oh, I almost hate Uncle Ramon—and I do hate his friend Don Castrillo!"

By including Castrillo in her disfavor, Dabney's curiosity as well as sympathy was aroused.

"Tell me why, little girl," he said; "trust me, I shall never betray your confidence."

"Because—because he wants to marry me."

Dabney's step halted and he faced Joséfa as though he had received a blow from some unseen force, for this intelligence was as a thunderbolt from a clear sky. His eyes flashed and a curse rose to his lips, for he had heard something of Castrillo's reputation; and then the sorrow of the Virginian's life reassailed him, and with the old pain it seemed

as if a new ache had come into his life to stay. But outwardly he quickly recovered himself, and said :

"Most ladies do not feel that way toward their admirers. When a man wishes to marry a woman it is the highest compliment he can pay her."

"But I do not love him!" broke forth Joséfa.

"Well, then, why disturb yourself over the matter. Dry your eyes and forget all about it. Nobody is going to make you wed him; and it is not likely to seriously hurt Castrillo, for discarded lovers soon console themselves with other fair faces."

He spoke thus to stifle the emotion in his own breast—the emotions that were awakened by the possibility of Joséfa's going out of his life, for not until now had he realized how dear the girl was to him. His last words did not nettle the señorita's vanity, as had been his intention, for she was too troubled to notice them.

"Uncle Ramon says though that I have got to marry him and the sooner I make up my mind to do it gracefully, the better it will be for all parties. He is forever bringing Don Castrillo home with him, and then he makes me sing for them and tries to tease me into a good humor by calling me a naughty minx; yet when we are alone with nobody but Níña to hear, he calls me a wilful wench and threatens me with the convent if I dare disobey him."

"Does Father Clement know of this?"

"Yes, I have told him."

"And does he approve of a marriage between you and Castrillo?" the Virginian asked incredulously.

"Oh, no! *padre mio* would not have me marry any one whom I did not love, for he says a marriage

without love is the worst sort of famine." The girl looked at him as she spoke, with a look that was pitiable to see. It reminded him of the look a stricken deer might give a hunter, and seemed to his strength the appeal of helplessness for mercy.

It was a moment that was irresistible, and the Virginian forgot the self-control that usually mastered his actions, and almost without knowing what was passing his lips said :

"Joséfa, do you think you could ever love me?"

Turning toward him the girl flung her arms about his neck, giving him a kiss in which was all the passionate love of her Spanish soul, such a kiss as thrilled every fibre of his being.

"O Carlos!" her voice sunk to a whisper, "I do love you, I do love you!" And her face was like an April day when the clouds are dissipated by the glorious rays of a noonday sun. Her eyes gleamed into his for a moment, then dropped bashfully, as her jet-black hair nestled in sweet masses on his breast.

Dabney felt as he had never felt before. It was enough for him that he held her so, that he felt her heart beating against his own. He felt this was a glimpse into Paradise. Now he had an incentive to live—to shield Joséfa ; to make her happy ; and yet how unworthy was he of such happiness. How pure and sinless was her life compared with his. Would she love him as she did if she knew him as he knew himself? The glorious promises of joy were his for the seeking—and yet it almost seemed a mockery from the tempter ; and so the old sorrow, the old ache,

his secret, stirred in his heart, bringing him back to the reality of life's desert sands.

The night wind from the prairie, fragrant with the perfume of myriads of flowers, blew like a soft salute. The girl nestled closer to him, all a-tremble.

"And you, darling," she ventured, "you love me, don't you? You kissed me as if you did; and you *Americanos* are not like the Spanish, you would not have done it unless you meant it, would you?" Her voice was tremulous with emotion and touched Dabney deeply. He drew her closer to him, and tilting her chin with his hand, imprinted a kiss on her lips that was long, loving, tender and reverent.

"Yes, little girl," he whispered, "I love you better than anything on God's green earth." And Joséfa did not notice that accompanying his words was a sigh, deep, low and long.

CHAPTER VIII

A BIT OF OLD SPAIN

It was Sunday afternoon near four o'clock.

The wooden amphitheatre built around the circus ring was crowded to its utmost capacity, not a seat was vacant; for the entire population of San Antonio was present to witness the bull-fight, the *fiesta-de-toro*.

They were all there, all ranks, sexes and ages—a heterogeneous mass of humanity drawn together by this promise of amusement, which has ever delighted the offspring of old Spain. It is a taint coming down through the ages, for a strain of barbarism underlies all civilizations, inherent in that human organism whose primeval law demanded an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Suffering seems to assuage this longing, which crops out wherever the present clashes with the past.

The populace of San Antonio, merry, pleasure-loving and happy, had left its cares and sorrows at home, and like children were out to enjoy themselves.

Upon the amphitheatre the sun shone down like molten brass. A pitiless, quivering brightness hung on the still air, while from the glistening sand of the arena shimmered wavelets of heat.

On the northern side of the building, where it was most shaded, sat the *gente fina*, the best people; the remaining tiers being occupied by the *mestizos*, the middle classes, who like lizards basked in the sunshine.

The scene presented a kaleidoscope of coloring, the peons in their white cotton, the women with their *rebozas* of brown, blue and red, while numerous were the lace mantillas worn by Mexican beauties. Fans waved, the building, like a beehive, buzzed with conversation. Many quips and quirks with liberty of speech were bandied forth among the aristocracy. The talking everywhere included idiomatic raciness analogous to the technicalities of prize-fighting. But at the sound of a horn, silence reigned supreme. The combatants were entering the arena.

Wearing bright silken cloaks came the picadors, mounted on horses gaily caparisoned and bedecked with paper roses. Among them was Pedrillo. Never had he looked more handsome. His velvet suit was resplendent with gold lace and buttons; his breast was covered with amulets and charms. A large felt hat ornamented with a long, rich red plume sat jauntily on his closely cropped head, giving to the rider a debonair expression, though his face was set and hard.

Amid the welcoming cheers of the crowd the picadors, with lances stiff yet ready, took up their positions near the *tablas*, or wooden barriers, placed at given intervals for their protection. Boldly Pedrillo scanned the assembly, bowing in acknowledgment of applause first to the aristocrats on the northern side of the amphitheatre. In rapid survey his eyes took

in Don Ramon, who with Joséfa and Castrillo occupied seats in the second row of tiers. Immediately a sardonic expression flitted over the picador's face; beneath his black moustache his white teeth gleamed like a dog's whose inclination is to bite; and quickly he turned his head toward the *mestizas*. There sat Niña, as beautiful as he had ever beheld her. A sad expression now crossed Pedrillo's countenance, for his mind went back to those days when he, a mere *chulo*, had been encouraged by her smile to bravery elevating him to the position of a picador; but all his honors were as nothing now, coming as they did with so much misery.

The wooden door to the pit was creaking and thither all eyes were turned. It was the *encierro*, the driving of the bull into the arena. Like the rising of the curtain the spirit-stirring moment had come.

Faces flushed, hands clapped, the betting began.

The bull, blinded by the light and noise, came along sullenly, showing he was being forced into what to him meant little pleasure. Stopping to paw the earth, as a faint cloud of dust rose from his hoofs, a loud bellow, like a blast of defiance, sounded on the air.

The picadors were circling round him, but as yet the animal seemed to notice nothing. He was an immense *toro* of great strength. Around his thick neck hung a garland of bright roses.

"He will fight!" cried the onlookers.

"Yes, and draw blood!" was the general verdict pronounced by the spectators.

"He is not a goat!" cried some.

"Nor a cow!" proclaimed others.

"Just give him time," was the comment that greeted his sullenness.

Expectancy, though, was trying on the nerves of the crowd, strained as they were to their utmost tension; for never is this feeling greater than when the animal known as man pits his strength against brute force. It means a conflict of mind against matter, a play in which adroitness must cope with fury.

"I shall shut my eyes when the fight begins," said Joséfa, who was present against her will, for Don Ramon had compelled her to accompany him and Castrillo.

"I will wager that she does not though, for her womanly curiosity will get the better of her," spoke up Don Ramon.

"It will be rare fun!" Castrillo affirmed. "The excitement beats cock-fighting, and I thought all ladies enjoyed excitement."

"Not when it is cruel," remonstrated Joséfa.

"Castrillo," broke in Don Ramon, "I sometimes tell her I think the convent atmosphere will be the only air suited for her to breathe, for that old foggy of a Frenchman has befuddled her mind with his quixotic views." And the Don shot at Joséfa a threatening glance, as his beetled brows contracted in anger. Well enough she realized she was being cautioned to be agreeable to her disliked suitor.

"Bull-fighting," Castrillo was saying, "is a custom of our country. In mediæval ages kings went into the arena and the nobility alone had the privilege of fighting *toros*. There is no nationality save ourselves whose men are brave enough to cope with such monsters; men who would gladly dare all for a

woman's smile—" But the fulsome compliment with which Castrillo had planned to end his speech was never finished, as the sight in the arena diverted his attention.

It was Pedrillo who first boldly attacked the bull, pricking his side with his lance, and then saved himself by shying behind a *tabla*.

The bull's eyes gleamed wickedly, the bright cloaks seeming to increase his fury. He was beginning to realize that he was being insulted, and lowering his big head as if for the crowd to better see his long, sharp horns, he rushed toward the picador. Pedrillo though was cool and easily evaded him. The inch deep wounds the other picadors inflicted seemed to infuriate him; and yet, as if he had singled out his man, all the bull's rushes were toward Pedrillo.

With neck bent so that his head swayed in a menacing way, the bull came on and the picador's horse swerved and dodged his assault. Undaunted the bull charged again. Low, prolonged, and angry bellows only intensified the silence of the spectators and enhanced the fear of Pedrillo's horse, that trembled and neighed as if unwilling to risk his life—but it was of no use. Though the picador kept off the bull by several well-directed stabs, it was only for a moment, and then the long horns went under the horse's belly, and ripped open his flanks, almost disemboweling him.

The crowd went wild.

"*Bueno! good! good!*" they cried.

While along the amphitheatre rang the shouts:

"*Magnifico toro!*"

"*Brava toro!*"

"Viva toro!"

The animal, seeming to realize he was the object of admiration, now did his best.

Don Ramon had risen in his seat. The scene seemed to swim before his eyes, and instead of the bull-fight he saw Pedrillo in the garden under the moonlight, for the expression on the picador's face was the same he had worn when the light of murder shone in his eyes.

It was pitiable to see the horse, with entrails trailing in the dust, still carrying the picador. In vain he swerved and dodged assault, for undaunted the bull continued to charge. Pedrillo raised his spear to ward him off, but with a sudden shake of his long horns the beast knocked it from his hands. It was all so swift the spectators could not follow his movements, for horse and picador rose in the air, and when they fell Pedrillo lay nearest the infuriated *toro*. The horse was writhing in death agony; streaks of blood crimsoned his sweat-white sides, but the bull heeded him not. Realizing the man, not the steed, was his adversary, he made toward Pedrillo as if to paw him to death.

The anxiety of the crowd could no longer be repressed and a frantic cry went up from a thousand throats.

"Corer, corer, run, run!" they yelled; and wild with excitement they rose in their seats and waved their hats and fans. Women laughed hysterically and Joséfa, white as alabaster, clenched her hands until the nails drew blood.

Pedrillo had already taken to his heels. The broken lance and the dead horse lay in the center of

the arena. Could the picador reach the *tabla* in time? The bull was pressing close behind him, bellowing furiously. Nearer and nearer he came, the clouds of dust almost hiding his bulky frame.

It was a race for life—Pedrillo was still ahead. The people hoped; they held their breath; the suspense, though lasting only a few moments, was awful—and then, high in the air, as when the wind catches a balloon, the bull sent Pedrillo flying.

The crowd had become a rabble. Deranged by the sight, they went wild with savagery. The men rose and waved their *sombreros* the women screamed, as if for the first time they understood what it all meant, and then their voices died in their throats as Pedrillo fell limp, with his head caught under his shoulder as only the dead can lie. The bull, like a conqueror, trampled him under foot, as if in subjugating him he wished to make sure he would never give him further trouble—and then, straining all the powerful muscles in his neck, tossed again the mangled form as a ball is tossed for the amusement of a baby.

The most vicious taste was sated at this display. There was nothing lacking in the spectacular effect. The poor, unfortunate man had simply met with an incident natural in his profession. After all he was nothing but a picador; and as chance directed, when he fell a lifeless heap of clay, it was on the side of the arena where sat the halfbreeds. Niña with the cry, "*Mi marido*, my husband!" had fallen in a faint.

The audience was drunk with excitement. Anxiety, eagerness, horror and delight were stamped on all faces. The minutes seemed ages. The sicken-

ing sensation of sympathy, the creeping shudder of disgust had passed away—the people cheered.

The bull was monarch of all he surveyed.

What was the pity of one picador less?

Only Don Ramon trembled—his eyes grew glassy and he shook as a man with a chill; so that Castrillo, noting it, jokingly accused him of having a chicken-liver.

While the remaining picadors held the bull's attention, the body of Pedrillo was removed, and a team of burros, blanketed in gold, drew out the remains of the mangled horse.

The picadors then retiring, *chulos*, or men on foot, entered and soon shot barbed darts into the neck of the bull, after which they quickly effected their escape.

Midst a storm of applause the matador now appeared in the ring, clad in purple satin knee-breeches, a white shirt opened at the throat, and a bright yellow sash about his waist.

Advancing toward the center of the pit he stood alone, bowed to the *alcalde*, addressed the crowd briefly, and threw down his velvet glove in token that he was ready to begin the fight.

The interest of all the spectators concentrated in him as he stood there with the courage of a gladiator. His right hand clasped a straight sharp blade, his left waved the *muleta*, a red flag measuring a yard square.

Now commences the deadly duel.

The matador is all coolness, the bull all rage.

The crowd is wild. They jeer. They hiss and try with all their might to irritate the man before

them—to provoke him, him whom they require to defend himself strictly in accordance with his art; for man being the creature of law, though lowering himself to fight with a brute, is hedged about by laws, forbidding him to kill save in the prescribed way.

The bull charges. The matador flirts the red rag in his face and fools him. The beast is maddened with pain. Every movement of the head makes the *banderillas*, the darts, hurt him the more. Hoarse bellows tell of his fury and suffering. With head lowered and longing for massacre, he charges again, but he is so blinded by rage and maddened by pain that the matador passes the *muleta* before his very eyes, even between his horns, and thus provoking him, laughs at his own skill.

But the crowd is growing weary. They yell, they roar, they hiss, and the matador, realizing they can not be kept waiting, decides to humor them by speedily ending the fray.

The bull advances again. The matador's spine curves like a bow, in concentrating his strength, then straightens itself as he meets the deadly attack. His thrust has entered between the bull's left shoulder and the blade bone. As the sword buries itself to the hilt the beast staggers, covered with a torrent of blood. Amidst a burst of tempestuous applause, the matador salutes the crowd, while wiping with his *muleta* the hot blood from his sword.

The people are crazed. The men cheer. The women throw him kisses, for at his feet, as if struck by lightning, the bull lies dead and the *fiesta* is ended.

Joséfa, weeping softly, did not notice until they had left the narrow street and were crossing the plaza that Don Ramon had disappeared and only Juan Castrillo accompanied her. She was too troubled by the scene just witnessed to think of aught else. "Come," said Castrillo, who, like the generality of men, hated the sight of tears, "don't cry; your lovely eyes were never intended for tears. Such things will happen."

"But his being Niña's husband makes it seem almost like a family affair."

"Well, let the widow grieve over him. If you lay other people's sorrows to your heart your face will be a sign-post of misery." Then changing his tone he continued:

"But I am glad you have such a gentle little heart. I hope it may prompt you to deal kindly with me; for, señorita, I love you devotedly, passionately, and if you should say me nay, methinks there would be naught else to live for, so that I would kill myself.

"As is the custom of our country," Castrillo went on, "before mentioning this to you, though I have longed in my soul to ask you, I sought permission of your uncle, who has bidden me Godspeed in my wooing."

The girl drew herself up haughtily and remained silent. Her look was not inviting. The scorn and deadly defiance of her attitude stung Castrillo, but his vanity suggested it might be shyness, and he laughed indulgently.

"Does silence mean consent?" he queried, trying to steal his arm about her waist. "If so, then you

will surely give me *un besito*, a little kiss, to seal the compact." And lower the man bent his head.

The girl's eyes blazed with emotion as she threw up her arm as one does who seeks to ward off a blow.

"Am I then so repellent to you?" Castrillo sneered. "My! how pretty you look in a passion."

An ugly light now came into his face, for his thoughts were far from righteous, and Joséfa, seeking to escape, was caught and strained to his breast in a passionate embrace.

"I shall take by force what is denied me by caprice," he said, showering hot kisses on her burning cheeks.

"You are a villain!" she gasped, struggling to free herself. "Stop," she cried, "how dare you!"

Castrillo laughed insolently and moistened his dry lips with his tongue. He seemed like a wolf ready to devour a lamb.

"I thought to cure you of your coyness!" he exclaimed. His manner suddenly changed, his voice sunk to the softest murmur. "Forgive me!" he pleaded, "but your beauty maddened me. If you will only promise to try to love me, if you will only try to think me worth loving a little, I shall some day hope to win you."

Now, though Don Alphonso's blood had been the purest Spanish, yet from her mother Joséfa inherited an Indian vein, which at times shone distinct—this was one. She struggled to disengage Castrillo's embrace with a strength that did her credit. It was with the same fierceness that her Aztec ancestry had fought for their rights against the Spaniard.

"I shall never marry you—never, never!" she avowed, and her voice rang contemptuous as she added:

"I loathe you, hate you, despise you! Your very touch is a pollution and you shall not kiss my lips that have already given their promises to another."

The man recoiled and partly relaxed his hold, as if stabbed with incredulity.

"This is news to me!" he hissed, "and will doubtless be the same to Don Ramon. And who, may I ask, is the clandestine lover of Joséfa Urrea? No, I will not let you go until you tell me." His manner was sulky, persistent.

Driven to bay and glorying in her love, the maiden answered:

"Carlos Daubigny!"

"Carlos Daubigny," sneeringly he repeated; "*Carlos Daubigny*, the blonde *Americano*. He is my rival, is he? Well, my *chiquita*, my little fool, I am glad that from your own lips I gain this intelligence, for now I shall not have to grope in the dark; the way is clear before me." Triumphant malice gleamed from his eyes and he seemed to swell with rage. His face, handsome in a rakish way, now looked fiendish, and he laughed a low chuckle that made Joséfa's blood crawl in her veins.

"Go!" he said sternly, and he pushed the trembling girl far from him. "Begone!" he commanded; "begone to your home, to your rest and dream of your love—but know that ere tomorrow's sun reaches the noonday mark, Carlos Daubigny's soul

will cease to hanker for earthly affections such as yours, for I go to grind my sword."

And making Joséfa an earth-sweeping bow, the rejected suitor, with an air of braggadocio, voiced his vengeance in muttered oaths as he strode away.

CHAPTER IX

THE GRITO BEGINS

The interval of time that elapsed since the Virginian came to San Antonio had developed Dabney into a Texan, but Father Clement still remained a Frenchman firm.

While the two walked together on the Military Plaza, in front of the House of the Priest, the young man remarked:

"This is God's country," to which the Jesuit nodded approvingly; but the expression on his face changed when the American added, "I wish Texas had a good government."

"*Mon Dieu!*" the Frenchman exclaimed, "dost one expect everything in this mortal life? A good climate and a good country the All Wise has seen fit to bestow. If a good government were added there would be nothing more to desire; and few of you, methinks, would ever wish to be angels."

A faint smile at the Jesuit's words flitted over the American's face, settling into an expression of sadness as he remarked:

"When I left Virginia to seek a future in the West, to my prayers I added, 'From pestilence and politics, good Lord, deliver me!'"

"As for myself," broke forth the Frenchman, "I sought Texas as a place of refuge. I was tired of wars and a supplicant for peace. Lo! I now find myself on the crater of a volcano, whose eruption is bound to occur sooner or later." The Priest sighed, but a look of resignation came into his countenance as he continued: "It was never intended we should find our heart's desire in this world; the older I grow, the more I realize it."

The young man, however, was not soliloquizing heavenward; for the mundane affairs of those troublesome times filled his mind to the exclusion of other thoughts. And the Frenchman, by that curious transportation of ideas, frequent when minds think alike, broached the subject uppermost in Dabney's reflection.

"I hear you are going to the Consultation at San Felipe. Is it true?"

"Yes," Dabney answered, "I shall go, God willing."

"God willing," repeated the Priest, "savors of a crusade."

"This may end in one."

"Not so fast, *mon ami*, not so fast. Youth is impetuous but age brings caution."

"I do not like the word 'Consultation.' 'Convention' would have been more expressive and better."

"No, no, no, *mon cher* Daubigny, Texas is a province of Mexico; and a convention in Mexico generally means a prelude to a revolution. When first I met you," continued the Priest, "and you were a stranger to me, I saw at a glance, you were

not a pioneer. Now that I know you, I can recognize the patriot."

"Thank you," said Dabney; "it is in my blood and will come out."

"I know it," agreed the Frenchman. Then pointing to the plaza, he said:

"A crowd seems to be gathering there. I wonder what interest brings them together. I hope there is nothing wrong."

Father Clement and Dabney soon stood on the outskirts of the little throng, in ear-shot of Henry Karnes, the trapper, who was speaking:

"Yip, the government of Mexico has forbidden the colonization of Texas by Americans, an' to make the order good, has shut up in prison two pioneers, Pat Jack an' Bill Travis; but sich a row was raised, the Greasers let 'em out, else blood would have got spilt. But that ain't all, an' 'tain't the worse, an' that's what I'm here for to tell you. The folks at Gonzales has got a message to give up their cannon, like how'se they gwine to keep off Injuns unless they has one. So their reply was a point-blank refusal and they stuck up a notice on their old *gingall*, 'Come And Take It!' for men was thar from the Colorado, the Guadalupe an' the Brazos, ready to fit an' die for it. 'Tis the beginning of a GRITO, boys, a GRITO—a revolution, a fight for our liberties."

Hearing this, the Priest turned to Dabney, saying:

"The match has touched the fuse."

Murmurs of disapproval of Mexican tyranny were running through the crowd, whose sense of justice resented this fresh insult.

"Like it wa'n't enough to combine Texas with Coahuila into one province!" broke in Captain Dickinson. "We were wrong, boys, in not putting our foot down and forbidding the capital ever being moved from San 'Tone to Saltillo."

"Well," spoke up James Bowie, "Santa Anna says he is our friend."

"Saying so don't make it true," Captain Dickinson protested, but refrained from further expression as Karnes had begun to speak again.

"The boys got jam crazy at the idee of Travis an' Jack not being 'lowed to come to Texas if they felt like it."

"The time is at hand," declared Father Clement to Dabney, "when the Texans will fight for their rights. Santa Anna's professions of love for them have sufficed for a while to stem the flow of their frenzy, but the storm of their indignation has long since been gathering. When subjects have to be governed by military rule," he continued, "the power ruling them is but a skeleton in armor, whose shield is usually heavy taxation. No wonder the oppressed try to free themselves from the clutch of such a ghoulisn monster. But come, *mon ami*, the night is far spent and you are starting for San Felipe tomorrow, so tarry with me as my guest."

Invited thus, Daubigney linked his arm through the Jesuit's, and together they started to the House of the Priest. As they moved along, Dabney intuitively felt he was being followed. The plaza was intensely dark and the gloom was further intensified by the feeble, flickering light of the pine torches where stood the crowd, for a dying moon was

shrinking into a shroud of blackness, but by its faint glow a figure was seen to move into the tracks of the men. Dabney's attention, though, was attracted by loud cheers and huzzaing, so that he and Father Clement halted to look. Rembrandt-like the lights and shadows threw out the figures clustered around the trapper.

"Karnes seems to be showing them something," observed the Priest.

"Yes," assented his companion, "it seems to be a notice they are going to nail on that tree—I wonder what it is?"

"We will see in the morning," replied Father Clement, adding, "for here we are at my house. Enter first, Daubigny; the door is always open."

Hardly had these words passed his lips when some one jostled against him, and murmuring "Pardon, Padre," passed on.

"Who was that?" asked Dabney from the doorway.

"It sounded not unlike the voice of Juan Castillo."

"Did you catch the oath he muttered before seeming to recognize your reverence?"

"No," answered the Priest, "all I heard him say was, 'Too late,' and I think if he were talking of reconciliation he spoke truly, for it is too late for Mexico to placate Texas now."

"Yes, *monsieur le curé*, the time has come for Texas to give Mexico—a— How would your tact express it, Father?"

"The blessing of the bullet, my son," was the Priest's reply.

Juan Castrillo, meanwhile, having failed in his plan of waylaying his rival, hastened on, consumed by that sullen rage that never dies, a rage only to be sated with blood.

"I shall find another time to reckon with you, Daubigney," he mumbled; adding, "For Juan Castrillo is not the man to be baffled by chance when an obstacle stands in the way of the woman he wants."

Noticing the group of excited men, he approached, and by the glare of the pine-knot torch read the circular Henry Karnes had just tacked up.

It was a call upon each Texan individually to decide whether he would longer wear the yoke of Mexico, and to answer by the mouth of his rifle if he would not.

"The devils be damned!" exclaimed Castrillo, turning away. "I must tell Ramon Urrea of this," he said to himself, "for it is the bugle call to the foe. No time for wooing now, with war at hand: both Urrea and I will have to hasten to Mexico."

* * * * *

The little hamlet of San Felipe resembled a hornets' nest, a hornets' nest molested by Santa Anna, when the General Consultation began. Sam Houston, with a company of East Texans, though on the way, had not as yet arrived; but Stephen Fuller Austin was already there.

Fearing those who had volunteered might be wrought up to bitter resentment, and desiring that the Texans should deliberate calmly and maturely on the righteousness of their cause, adopting such measures as the tangibility and salvation of condi-

tions and the country required, Austin publicly addressed them in a speech that briefly reviewed Mexico's injustice to Texas.

It was a speech that was never to be forgotten and cast a wizard's spell upon his hearers; so that old Texans years afterwards, sitting by their firesides, could close their eyes and see the speaker as he stood that day in the prime of life, his face aglow with patriotism, the most striking personality in that throng of noble men. His tone as well as his words of winnowed wisdom his listeners never forgot.

Austin's ability to sway men's minds, his power, lay in the way in which he separated the grain from the chaff—the actual privileges of the Texan colonists from the fraudulent promises of Mexico. He told of his journey to the City of Mexico, whither he went as the emissary of the people of Texas, carrying their appeal for justice. Briefly he touched on the hardships to which he was there subjected, his long languishing in prison before being granted an audience with Santa Anna, whom the Texans had thought their friend. Austin's explanation of such treatment showed that Santa Anna, busy in his plans to make himself Dictator, sought to retain him as a hostage from Texas. Austin pointed out Santa Anna's cunning in allying himself with the priesthood, for the Dictator realized that, as he was at heart and had heretofore been openly the enemy of the Church, this was the safest policy to insure popularity with the masses, whose favor was even more necessary than the support of the Army. That the Mexican Government had forbidden colonization

by, and trade with, Americans, Austin asserted was an acknowledgment that they feared and were jealous of American superiority, and that Santa Anna had shown himself false to his promises as "a patriot and lover of liberty." In conclusion Austin said :

"I counseled in all good faith with Santa Anna, accepting his professions of faith as sincere, giving as my decided opinion that the inevitable consequence of sending an armed force to this country would be war. I stated that there was a sound and correct moral principle in the people of Texas which was abundantly sufficient to restrain or put down all turbulent or seditious movements; but that this moral principle could not and would not unite with an armed force sent against this country. On the contrary it would resist it and repel it and ought to do so!"

Loud cheers.

"In his arrogance he has disregarded the advice I uttered as the mouthpiece of Texas; and the Government has demanded that we give up our arms; and Mexican soldiers, we hear, are preparing to cross our border. The time has therefore come for our people to show the Dictator of Mexico that when Texas insists upon justice. she means in truth all that she says."

"And will write the truth in blood!" shouted James Bowie.

"Damned if we don't!" chimed in a man named Bonham, who was of South Carolina blood.

Speechmaking had become the order of the day; and as the volunteers clamored to hear more, Austin,

knowing his men, beckoned to Dabney and asked him to address the crowd.

There was a buzz of expectancy as the Virginian arose to comply. The blood swiftly mounted to his cheeks, and receding left perspiration in beads upon his brow. His dignity of manner became his tall, straight figure; his voice, which at first was hesitating, soon lost its tremor—for he forgot the crowd and spoke as one does who has a message to deliver. It was a speech never intended to be repeated; printed it would appear bare, unmasked, for explicit expression is to an orator what daylight is to an actor. It divests him of that subtle effect produced by circumstances and conditions—the footlights of success. What Dabney said was timely, and accommodating his speech to his hearers, his homely illustrations went straight to their hearts, for he gave them the pith of patriotism rather than the verbiage of oratory. In closing he suggested a sentiment that later was verified. It was this:

“Some day the annals of history will record this gathering, and in letters of gold will shine the name Stephen Fuller Austin, the Father of Texas. I hope that generations now unborn may deem it wise to raise here on this spot made sacred by this General Consultation a capital for Texas, where just laws shall be framed for her people, and that they may call the seat of government not San Felipe, for that sounds Mexic, but simply by the name of the patriot—Austin.”

While Dabney spoke perfect silence prevailed, and when he finished murmurs such as these passed from lip to lip:

"Who be that young 'un, anyway?"

"He talks like a streak of lightning."

"Yes," assented Bowie, "if we want help from Uncle Sam, we may pick on him to ask for it."

"'Cause he is young enough to go and come back in a hurry," remarked Henry Karnes; adding, "And that's ther kind you want to send for a chunk of fire, if yourn be gwine out."

In the forefront of the listeners, under a blackjack tree, Deaf Smith had stood, vainly endeavoring to hear all that was going on; so when Dabney's speech was concluded the Indian hunter turned to his friend Karnes with the request that he would tell him what the Virginian had said. "You know I be hard of hearing," he explained to those about him.

Stopping first to spit the amber from his mouth before replying, the trapper supplied himself with a fresh chew, then dropping into the lingo of the frontier said:

"'Though I ain't 'xactly er Indian hunter, like you be, Smith, I don't waste my time picking er flowers, so's I ain't gwine bother ter tell jist how he say it, 'cause I'd have to ile up my jaws with bar grease ter equal ther soft-soap on his tongue; but he argifies ter keep er fightin', an' er clawin' an' er scratchin' till we drive off all pestering varmints; an' he looks like he's got sand in his craw an' I b'lieve he'll help us ter clean out these damn Greasers." And for a period to his remarks the trapper used a stentorian oath, which punctuated his feelings toward the Mexican nation.

The result of this gathering of volunteers was, the General Consultation appointed Austin and others as commissioners from Texas to seek aid in the United States. And Charles Dabney was urged by all present to accompany Austin on this journey.

CHAPTER X

THE COMANCHE WITNESSES A SCENE

Desolate and dreary now was San Antonio. A little garrison under Colonel Bowie guarded the Alamo, for as the time for planting crops drew near, most of the volunteers had to scatter to their homes.

Joséfa had taken refuge with Mother Dickinson since Don Ramon with Juan Castrillo had departed for Mexico, for Niña had deserted her and the Priest could not always stay at the adobe on the Plaza de las Islas.

These were busy days for the Jesuit, who was still trying to pour oil on the troubled waters; so that the House of the Priest ranked with the Alamo as a gathering place for the discussion of public happenings in Bexar. The spirit that had remained dormant in the Frenchman during the years wherein Joséfa had known him was now aroused. He secretly longed to shoulder his musket and march against Mexico, for Father Clement despised injustice; but his so doing would have been making common cause with an English-speaking people, and that the Frenchman would never do as long as he could retain his faculties and remember Waterloo.

One morning early, Charles Dabney, having sought the Priest, for he wished to consult him,

the two men went for a walk that more private might be their conversation.

"I hear," said Father Clement, "that at the General Consultation you made your name famous."

"What's in a name?" laughed Dabney.

"Almost everything," assured the Jesuit. "Baa-lam's beast saw conditions and spoke, but having no name has come down through the ages simply as an ass."

It then followed that Father Clement learned for the first time of the Virginian's determination to accompany Ausin and the Commissioners to the States.

"It is a laudable errand, my son, but we shall miss you sorely."

"I hate to go myself," acknowledged Dabney, "but believe the occasion demands it; hence it is not a question of preference but of duty."

"I dare say you are right," acquiesced the Priest, "albeit that alone the future can reveal. If one always knew which road to take there would be no need of guide-posts." And heaving a deep sigh, he continued:

"You will see new faces, different scenes, and perchance have adventures to occupy your thought; and we shall have only a memory, like a pleasant dream, to comfort us."

The Virginian's face was earnest, a new zeal burned in his eyes, illumining his countenance, making it stronger, more resolute, more manly. His life heretofore had seemed poor in purpose, hence worthless in result, due perhaps to the old sorrow

that sapped his strength, the secret that at times bore heavily upon and well-nigh overpowered him. Now the past receded from his view and down the vista of the future he saw a splendid career awaiting him—a glorious name on the country's roll of heroes. This mental picture of daring perils for honor's sake was not solely traceable to awakened patriotism—it was not simply love for liberty, love for right; but love for love, love for woman, and the woman was Joséfa. It was thought of her that brought him to seek the Priest.

"*Monsieur le curé*," he burst forth, not able longer to contain himself, "I wish to marry Joséfa before I go—and I have come to ask you to sanction it." He did not wait for the Priest's answer, his earnestness carried him on.

"You cannot understand how anxious I feel about this. You don't know how dear she is to me. I know I am unworthy of Joséfa, yet my love for her will purify my soul, will make a better man of me. You don't know how the idea of leaving her hurts me—but God grant that it won't be for long. The consciousness that she is my wife, mine forever, would keep me right and nerve me for any danger." He had spoken rapidly, freely, and now that he paused noted for the first time the expression on the Jesuit's face was not encouraging. Whereupon an earnest conversation ensued, terminating in a debate that excited alike the Virginian and the Frenchman. The younger man's arguments and persuasions, beggings and pleadings, had seemingly no effect upon the elder, for the Jesuit remained inexorable; firm,

though not stern, with the tenacity of his sect clinging to his convictions.

"No," he said in a voice that, despite modulation, held in it the authority of one who could command, "I do not agree with you, though you may not perhaps see it, for man's heart is selfish above all things; yet I would fail in my duty, *mon ami*, unless I told you the right. Besides it is my sacred trust to try, so far as within my power lies, to shield my god-child from all pain. Joséfa therefore is not to know you are going, for it would only grieve her and she will have enough to bear as it is. So unless you will promise silence, as I live," emphasized Father Clement, "I will see to it that you do not meet again before you take your leave!"

Hearing these words and noting the determination on the Jesuit's face, Dabney realized it was useless to thwart him. Nothing else remaining to be done, with the best grace he could muster the Virginian acquiesced.

It was then agreed that he could see Joséfa before starting on his long trip back to the East, back to his former environment, back to the Past.

The course to be pursued having been decided, arm-in-arm the two men began retracing their steps toward the city, for the evening sun had crossed the noon-day mark and was beginning to cast longer shadows as it traveled. When the Dickinson cabin was reached they were both calm, with that quietude that generally follows a storm.

Joséfa, joyful with the pleasure that Dabney's coming caused, never for a moment suspected aught

of the conversation that had taken place. She quaffed the sweets of the hour like a little child, little reckoning of the bitter lees the future contained.

When chameleon-like the sapphire of the day changed into the topaz of the evening and the south breezes began to rustle the trees, the girl and her lover went for a walk. Their steps took them down the old road, near the river, leading to the Missions.

Daubigny tried to appear natural, to be bright, cheerful, and yet he felt his efforts were a poor feint. As they walked under the wide-spreading pecans, the limbs of which nearly overlapped the road, the Virginian noticed the mistletoe clinging to the upper branches; and so he told her its legend; how sweethearts might kiss under the mistletoe because its berries are pearls and pearls keep their secrets. Joséfa laughing gaily, mischievously asked him to climb a tree and get her a piece that she might take it home and train it to cover the arcade. And then—her mouth was such a miracle of beauty, he clasped her to his heart and kissed her again and again, feeling that in all the universe no other lips were half so sweet.

But as the sun's retreating footsteps shone like a trail, losing itself in the infinity of space, and a chilliness began to settle on the earth, Dabney feared that it was typical of his happiness. The terrible truth of having so soon to leave Joséfa came over him like a wave, submerging him in sadness. His countenance mirrored his feelings and the señorita's love-seeking eyes were quick to notice something was troubling him.

"What causes your sadness, señor?" she asked in a quivering voice, while a chill crept into her heart.

"War is an awful calamity," was his reply, which to her seemed irrelevant, not knowing that he had been thinking of his planned trip with Austin, of which she was to be kept in ignorance.

"Then why think of what is unpleasant, why think of anything save that we are together?" And stooping down she gathered a bunch of bright-tinted leaves and fastened them at her breast. Looking at her, so beautiful and trusting, the Virginian longed to tell her this was his farewell, his *adios*; but the memory of his promise to the Jesuit sealed his lips. The recollection of the Priest's words, "Separations are never bettered but only intensified by partings," rang in his ears like the tolling of a death-knell and restrained him.

Toward the east, whither he was so soon to travel, Dabney would not look; but facing westward, the American took the señorita's hand in his, saying:

"I have something to ask you, little girl; may I ask it?"

Stealing a glance toward her lover, Joséfa saw his face had turned deadly white and that he had compressed his lips; and as no sound came forth, she exclaimed:

"O Carlos! what is it? What trouble can beset you that you will not let Joséfa share?"

"I wish to ask you," huskily he replied, "that come what may, you will always try to think the best you can of Charles Dabney?"

The manner in which he said it, more than his words, convinced the girl it was the request of a desperate man; hence all the millions of fears that stir and flutter in a love-wrung breast were awakened, for ineffably tender and impetuously ardent was Joséfa's nature. Thinking not of self nor of the world, but only of her love, the señorita pillowed her head against his heart while hers beat wildly.

"O Carlos, my dearest one!" she whispered, "I shall always think well of you, and that you should know; for I love you, Carlos, better than I love aught else; yes, more than she loves even Father Clement does Joséfa love you—her heart is all yours."

The American was constrained, however, by the promise he had given the Jesuit, and dared not trust himself to speak. Temptingly fair did the girl's forehead look against his rough coat, and Dabney sought not to withstand the temptation. Pushing back her raven locks he bent nearer, intending to imprint on her brow *un besito*; but Joséfa raising her face kindled with emotion, changed his purpose, and he kissed her ruby lips instead, in a long, lingering kiss, full of pity rather than passion. But the Mexican maiden little dreamed that he was bidding her good-by and that it was *un beso* of farewell.

Twilight spinning its gray web over the world, the twin towers of the Mission of La Concepción seemed blending with the sky; and as Dabney and Joséfa turned homeward there was a little rustle of the leaves not made by the wind, but caused by a human being slipping into the river's foliage.

Neither the señorita nor the Virginian, however, heard, for almost noiselessly Big Terrapin, the Comanche chief, having witnessed the lovemaking, stole away.

* * * * *

Before the glory of the morning stole into the eastern sky Dabney had already left San Antonio, though Joséfa knew it not. As the day wore on without her seeing him she wondered in vain for the reason, and the Priest deemed it kinder not to enlighten her. She tried to console herself by arguing no harm could come to one so noble, so brave, so strong; and yet forebodings and fears racked her, so that as the time drifted into weeks, instead of wondering expectancy, a sad light crept into the señorita's eyes, around which dark circles spoke of suffering. Listless and languid became her movements, for still no tidings came of her hero.

Watching the road, Joséfa did not realize that pleasures can never return through the avenues by which they came, but are lost in the labyrinth of experience.

Mother Dickinson, appreciating the girl's loneliness, tried to comfort her, and being more of a housewife than a sentimentalist, she counseled:

"Do not keep looking for him, honey, for 'tis a true saying that a watched pot never boils."

But Joséfa heeded not, for Carlos Daubigny had gone out of her life, taking the sunshine with him. And meanwhile Father Clement pondered, and prayed, and held his peace.

CHAPTER XI

THE WOLF ON THE FOLD

Clang! Clang! Clang! Furiously pealed the alarm from the belfry of San Fernando.

Clang! Clang! Clang! Echoed the jarring, discordant ringing far and wide over the old city of Bexar.

"Hear you that sound?" asked one.

"Aye, aye; it means run, run, run, there's danger!"

"Come,," said the first speaker, "let's hasten to ask of the sentinel the cause."

"Indians, the Comanches; that demon Big Terrapin thinks now is the time to fleece the fold."

"More likely it's the damn Mexicans," interrupted a listener. "They are worse than the Comanches, Apaches, and Lipans put together."

"'Tain't the Mexicans; not yit, boys, not yit," spoke up a frontiersman; adding, "Yer needn't ter 'spect 'em till the spring grass comes—fer the pryrie 'twixt here an' the Rio Grande is as bare as a crow's nest at this time o' year and their pack animals would starve 'fore they got here."

"The city of San Antonio was already in a tumult. The people, excited by the ringing of the bell, poured into the streets like a mob, and the greatest confusion prevailed; for the tocsin of war had sounded.

"The Mexicans, the Mexicans!" was passed from lip to lip. "The Mexican army is approaching."

"True, true," declared Father Clement sadly; "already their troops are crossing the slopes west of the San Pedro."

"Impossible!" cried Captain Dickinson.

"Seeing is believing," replied the Jesuit, "and with my own eyes from the belfry of San Fernando I saw the sun glistening on their uniforms."

"To the Alamo, the Alamo!" the crowd began to yell.

"Yes, the Alamo, the Alamo!" repeated Captain Dickinson, as he dug deep his spurs in his horse's flanks.

Hurriedly the American sought the safety of the Alamo, for there was no time to be lost, no time for preparation, the wolf was already upon the fold.

Within the Alamo all was astir. The atmosphere of gray antiquity pervading the place was dispelled by the moving life of the little garrison, who by ones and in groups were hurrying to their posts of duty.

"Great God!" exclaimed Colonel Bowie, as the men came running in, "to think how I would like to fight if I could." Then turning on his side he buried his face in his arm, while sobs shook his poor, emaciated frame. The excitement of the moment had proven too much for one who for weeks had lain flat on his back with typhoid-pneumonia. When he could control his voice, Bowie spoke:

"How much corn is there in the granary?"

"Three bushels, sir," answered Tapley Holland, the quartermaster,

"Evans," shouted Bowie, "you and Bonham make a search throughout the city and bring in all the provisions you can get. Quick, hurry!"

To Holland he then said, "Tell Travis to report to me."

"Here I am, Colonel," spoke up Travis, "ready for orders."

"Come close to my cot," said Bowie, "for my voice is weak, and we must plan our defense, for since I am sick the command will fall upon you."

When the bells of San Fernando rang out on the air, Mother Dickinson, sitting on her cabin step, holding her little girl in her lap, wondered what it meant; but she was soon to know, for in a few minutes her husband galloped up, calling out:

"The Mexicans are upon us! Hand me the child and jump up behind."

"Joséfa," called Mother Dickinson, "the Mexicans have come, we are off for the Alamo; come along!"

"I cannot," replied the girl, "before first seeing Father Clement."

"He bade me tell you stay with my wife," called Captain Dickinson.

"Don't wait for me," urged Joséfa, "for I shall follow just as soon as I can get a few things."

While she was hurriedly preparing a bundle, Father Clement entered the cabin.

"No," said the Jesuit, "I shall not go within the fort, for I may accomplish more for your safety by remaining outside; for being a priest, in the name of the Church I can implore mercy of the Mexicans,

But hasten, my daughter, for I shall not leave you until you are safe with Mother Dickinson."

As the two sped on, the Jesuit asked :

"Have you seen Nifia recently?"

"Yes, this morning I saw her as she hurried by, telling me the muleteers arrived from the Rio Grande had brought a peddler with them who had lovely dresses for sale. Strange, Father, she always has money, though Pedrillo is dead and she doesn't seem to work."

"Humph!" muttered the Priest aside, "love of money is the root of all evil." Then in a louder tone asked, "Have you heard aught of your uncle since his departure?"

"No, there is no news."

"Well," said Father Clement, "I learned from the muleteers last night that Urrea and Castrillo were both high now in the Mexican Army."

"Is that true?"^a Joséfa asked incredulously.

"Yes, they have been given responsible places because they are familiar with the territory of Texas."

"I am glad," said Joséfa, "for if other interests claim their attention we may be rid of them."

"It is the old case of an ill wind, my child; but that was not all I heard."

"No?"

"Rumor has it that Juan Castrillo has wedded the sister of Santa Anna."

"Oh, *Madre de Dios!*" exclaimed the girl joyfully.

"Why, Joséfa, I am shocked at your humor. Me feared this news would break thy heart, my *chiquita*, my little one." And the Jesuit forced a laugh.

"O Padre, you know how I despise him!"

"I knew thou hadst often said so, but an old codger like me can not always reason woman's words and woman's ways as premises to a correct conclusion; but here we are at the Alamo. May the Blessed Mother shield you, my lamb, from all evil!" And bending over he imprinted a fatherly kiss on her lips.

Joséfa now burst into tears; the formidable aspect of the fort awed her.

Men were preparing to mount the Alamo with artillery.

"Put four pieces facing the gateway," Travis was ordering.

"Yes," said Captain Dickinson, "they will command the bridge across the river."

"We must next put four more to face the north and four more to face the town," continued Travis.

"Colonel, that won't leave but two for the south side of the church," remonstrated Dickinson.

"It can't be helped," Travis declared, "for if 'tis a siege we've got to protect our water supply, for these *acéquias* are just as necessary for our existence as those oxen they are driving in the quatrel."

"How many did Evans and Bonham succeed in getting?" asked Dickinson.

"Thirty beeves," spoke up Holland, "and about eighty bushels of meal."

"Humph!" exclaimed Dickinson, "mighty poor commissary for a besieged fort."

"But," said Travis, "God is on our side, and we must not think of food, but of freedom."

"What's our strength?" queried Bonham.

"Well," answered Dickinson, "I think Colonel Bowie said we were one hundred and forty-two."

"That's right," affirmed Travis, "and we are all American colonists who migrated to Texas under the colonization law protecting our rights and our liberties. But come, boys, let's to work, so as to show Santa Anna what a tough job might will have when tackling right."

The garrison of the Alamo was a motley throng; men whose lives, many of them, had been adventurous, such as those times made possible and which now would scarcely be undertood. The incrustations of their frailties, like the lichen on a stone, were superficial compared with their rock-bottom worth. Rough-hewn they were; but patriotism is a lapidary that can polish the plainest life into beauty, an alchemy that can separate the dirt and quartz and sand, transmuting alloy into purest gold.

The Alamo, like all missions, though combining presidio with church, was more of a monastery than a fort. It lacked the strength and compactness of a regular fortification. In the southeast corner of the enclosure, which covered in all an area of nearly three acres, stood the old church building, its walls four feet thick of solid masonry. Connected with it were the narrow convent-rooms used as barracks. Part of the roof of the chapel had fallen in, but this did not prevent the rear end of the building being used as a magazine.

Everybody within the fort was busy. All hands worked. Most of the men busied themselves strengthening the wall, while a few prepared missiles. Even Mother Dickinson and Joséfa lent their aid in moulding bullets. The men intuitively felt the refining influence of the women's presence and gave them soldiers' homage. But as the click, click of molten lead fell from the bullet-mould a rough-looking individual remarked :

"Mighty sweet music to hear 'em clattering in the pan. I hope we will blow 'em to hell."

Just then a hubbub was heard toward the gateway.

"What's up?" was the query.

"It's four travelers pushing on to reach the Alamo."

A man in a deer-skin suit and a fox-skin cap, carrying a beautiful rifle, appeared their leader, while a savage-looking creature, with a deep sabre cut adding fierceness to his countenance, brought up the rear.

As the little band entered the Alamo building a Texan volunteer, looking up from cleaning his gun, casually inquired :

"Who be ye, stranger?"

Whereat a voice rang out, clear as a clarion, causing every person to stop and listen :

"Who be I, stranger?" it repeated, "I am that same Davy Crockett, fresh from the backwoods, half horse, half alligator, a little touched with the snapping turtle. I can wade the Mississippi, leap the Ohio, and slide without a scratch down a honey-locust. I can whip my weight in wild cats, and if

any gentlemen pleases, for a ten-dollar bill he can throw in a cougar. I can hug a bear too close for comfort and eat any man opposed to Texas liberty."

When this speech, so typical of the Tennessean, ended, a hurrah loud and long went up from the Alamo; for the reputation of David Crockett was well known throughout the land and his presence was welcomed with delight by the little garrison.

Turning to the crowd, in a characteristic way Crockett introduced his friends, a juggler, a bee-hunter and a scar-seamed old pirate, who all, like himself, he said, "Had come to lend a hand in helping Texas on the highroad to freedom."

While good humor played about his mouth, in concluding his remarks the backwoodsman said:

"Boys, ain't you got something for a fellow to wet his whistle, 'cause I feel dry as a powder-horn."

After being refreshed, David was ushered into the room where lay James Bowie.

While the two talked, the sick man ran his hand under his pillow, producing a long knife, sharpened on both sides, and slightly curved at the point. Holding it so the light gleamed upon the blade he said:

"Look, Colonel, this is what the boys call a bowie-knife. My brother Rezin had the first one made. He took an old file and got a blacksmith to shape it this way, then he gave it to me. 'In the hands of a strong man,' says Rezin, 'it is better than a pistol, for a pistol sometimes misses fire, but a knife strikes to hit.' Soon as the other boys saw it, they wanted one, so lots of 'em have been made since. You

could tickle a fellow's ribs a long time with this little instrument before you would make him laugh, couldn't you?" And Bowie chuckled.

"The bare sight of it almost gives me the colic!" was Crockett's comment. As Bowie had several of these knives, he begged David to accept one. With a grim smile the Tennessean took it, saying:

"I guess you feel 'bout the bowie-knife like I do 'bout my rifle, my Betsy. I love her like she was human, so I had to name her, and I am ready to introduce her to Santy Anny any time he shows his pumpkin face within these walls." He stroked his chin, shut his eyes, and threw back his head in a knowing fashion.

"Ah," he continued, "I would rather be a coon-dog and b'long to a nigger in the forest than to be oppressed by such a skunk as Santy Anny, who, while feeding you on fox-tails and thistledown, has been grinding the life out of you with his iron heel. I'd like to have his scalp to make me a moccasin."

In so saying, Crockett voiced the sentiment of every man within the fort. When it came to his taking the prescribed oath of allegiance to Texas he absolutely refused to swear fidelity unless the adjective "Republican" was inserted between the words "Future Government" of Texas.

"No, sir'ree-bob, I ain't going to do it, for Davy Crockett ain't the man to jump out of the frying-pan into the fire. That's why I left Tennessee, 'cause I vowed Andry Jackson should never label me with no such tag as 'My Dog'; for I am a free man,

and I want a free government, for the rights of all people alike to be respected."

It did not take him long to become the soldiers' favorite. With words of cheer and comfort he encouraged all about him. When his store of good stories was well-nigh exhausted he would seize the fiddle and play for the men, meanwhile conjuring up a fresh supply of anecdotes from his limitless memory. Davy was a natural yarn-spinner as well as a natural musician. He handled the bow with the same passionate love with which he used his rifle in tackling a grizzly. He twanged the fiddle to many a familiar tune, so that there was jig-dancing, shuffling, and singing of songs ribald and merry, then plaintive and pathetic, as is often the case on the verge of a battle.

Thus was gloom driven from the Texas tent; so later, when Santa Anna himself arrived with his fresh forces and dispatched a notice to the Alamo, demanding unconditional surrender, though Travis courteously received and dismissed the messenger, afterwards quickly his cannon boomed a defiant NO in the face of the Mexican army. The old city of Bexar reverberated the echo. The plains took up the sound and sent it back as if the land, awakening with liberty, voiced Travis's refusal to surrender, and belched forth defiance.

Though his courier had not returned, Santa Anna apprehended its meaning and a look hard and determined settled upon his face, a face never pleasant to look upon, with its crafty black eyes and thick, bestial mouth. Turning to an orderly he said:

"Tell General Castrillo that I wish to speak to him immediately."

In a few moments the officer entered the room.

"Come, be seated," Santa Anna said; "privately we can dispense with army etiquette. Now what have you learned?"

"Nothing, General, of any import. The woman, though, has agreed and is at our service. Tomorrow night she goes to the fort, seeks admission, and then later will steal out and tell us with whom we have to deal. She is clever and inventive. Words will come to her mouth without our putting them there."

"Speak on and openly," commanded Santa Anna; "withhold nothing."

"*Cierto!*" said Castrillo; "as I have told you before, she was a servant in the household of Ramon Urrea, where lived his niece, a pretty huzzy, lost to her own good by being enamored with one of those damn *Americanos*. She loves the old padre like a father. This is his house you now occupy. I have no patience with him, a praying old ass, and it did me good to inconvenience him by establishing your quarters here."

"Do you mean the French priest who has been seeking to dissuade me from war?"

"Yes, Father Clement, the most powerful factor in all San Antonio."

"Well, proceed."

"The spy-woman, Niña, will go to the Alamo, seeking Joséfa Urrea, to tell her Santa Anna's soldiers have seized the House of the Priest, and that

in the confusion Father Clement was accidentally shot. That he is now dying and wishes to give her his blessing."

"Let the woman go to the Alamo under a flag of truce," suggested Santa Anna.

"No, General, let her rush off alone; it will look less as if the act was planned."

"Capital, Castrillo; you would have made a better diplomat than a soldier."

"All is fair in war—and love," came the reply, the last words of which were uttered so low Santa Anna did not hear them; for just then the messenger returned, bearing Travis's refusal. Santa Anna's face was livid with rage as he read it.

"Castrillo," he said, "have a blood-red banner run up on the highest belfry in the city, for their impertinence merits my vengeance. Tell the woman to let the garrison of the Alamo know all prisoners will be shot and the best lands divided out to the Mexican soldiers. This will have its effect, and soon the *gringos diablos* will come pouring out of that hole of a fort like rats when a ship's afire, glad enough to lay down their arms. Tell her to let them know, *Santissima Virgen!* all foreigners will be treated like pirates unless they surrender, for in suppressing this spirit of rebellion Texas shall not only pay for it but receive no quarter. This province shall learn to respect the Government of Mexico!"

The Spaniard, leaving the room, muttered under his breath:

"And Santa Anna seeks to make himself the Government of Mexico."

Castrillo's plan to send Niña to the Alamo was prompted more by his desire to rescue Joséfa than to learn the condition of the garrison. When he thought of her, the woman he loved, being in such danger, sadness flooded his soul like a gigantic sea-wave. The probability of Santa Anna's storming the fort while Joséfa was within, maddened him, for rake though he had been, never had Castrillo loved any one or desired any thing as ardently as he did Joséfa. Her memory haunted him. He laid awake at night and thought of her beauty with a longing that was unbearable, that crazed him. Then he cursed her in his heart for refusing to marry him, until his passion, like a prairie fire, swept all else before it, and he felt only how he loved her, how unbearable life would be without her.

He knew his plan was an audacious one, but success often crowned audacity; so he would take Joséfa out of the Alamo, and once she was in his power he would lift the veil revealing to her young heart all the mystery of love—then she would be his.

A blood-red banner soon flapped like the broken wing of a cardinal from the belfry of San Fernando.

The Texans within the Alamo needed no interpretation of its meaning. Looking at it they nerved themselves for the worst, determining to sell their lives at the dearest cost to Mexico, for they knew surrender meant tyranny; more terrible than death.

"Jist look at that flag," said Davy Crockett, "floating thar in God's bright sunshine. a disgrace to humanity."

"It means they want our blood," gruffly said a volunteer.

"Well, they will have to buy it with their own," spoke up Bonham, who added cynically, "'cause they ain't such friends that we are going to give it to them for nothing."

"Right you are," broke in Travis, "for I shall never surrender or retreat. I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible, and if the Mexicans take the fort it shall be a defeat to them."

All who heard the tall, red-haired North Carolinian recognized it was not vain boasting, but moral sublimity, for no tinge of cowardice lurked in his honest eye.

"What does this flag floating over us stand for, anyway?" inquired Crockett.

Pointing to the ensign above the Alamo, Travis explained:

"The red, white, and green are the colors of Mexico, while the two stars stand for Texas and Coahuila."

"I don't relish fighting under no Mexican flag!" declared Crockett.

"Me neither!" echoed a chorus of voices.

"But this is not the flag of Mexico, but of this province," expostulated Captain Dickinson, "for their emblem is an eagle with a snake in his mouth, rising out of a cactus tree."

"Nothing could suit them better," broke in Davy Crockett, "for they've got all the slippery meanness of a serpent, an' well might they put the eagle, which is our bird, above the cactus, for the Ameri-

can would never be such a fool as to settle himself in a prickly-pear bed, whar nothing but a snake could be comfortable.

"No," he continued, "them two stars be very pretty, but as Texas don't want to be looked upon 'long with Coahuila, s'pose we strike Coahuila out an' jist let one star stand for Texas."

"Good, good!" exclaimed all who heard him.

"One star for Texas!"

"We don't want Mexico as our background either," added Bonham.

"Yer bet we don't," agreed a volunteer.

"Let's make a flag for ourselves," chimed in another.

"Them women in the fort can make us a beauty," broke in a young Texan.

"Then go and fetch them," commanded Crockett.

After Mother Dickinson and Joséfa were summoned, he continued, fixing his eyes on Joséfa, being a great admirer of beauty:

"We sent for you 'cause we need your taste to make us a flag, to replace this thing flapping above us," indicating the one over the Alamo. "An'," added Crockett, pointing to the red banner on San Fernando, "we don't fancy the looks of that thar neither. It's too much like the Devil's own sign; so we want something 'xactly opposite, something more like the blue of heaven!" And the bear-hunter raised his eyes to the azure sky shining through the opening in the old church roof.

"Then wait," said Joséfa, to whom his words seemed particularly addressed, as she hurried back

to the convent-room that was set aside for the women's use. Reaching there, the señorita unrolled a small bundle she had brought with her. Besides a few necessities, it contained the rich cerulean silk her grandmother had brought from the Canary Islands, the texture of which was so strong and heavy that, having been rarely used, it was still bright and beautiful. Speeding back to the church the girl displayed the dress, upon which the men cast admiring glances, for the silk contrasted strangely with the coarse suits of buckskin and homespun worn by the Texans. Soon the skirt was ripped from the waistband and spread open, presenting area amply large to secure therefrom a flag.

"It is just as opposite in color from the Mexican's flag as we are in principle," commented Captain Dickinson.

"But it's got to have one star on it," declared a weatherbeaten frontiersman.

"Yes," said an old Texan, "the Star of Tejas," giving the word Texas its old-time pronunciation.

"I have not any silk of a contrasting color," regretfully sighed Joséfa.

"Don't you pester 'bout that, honey," spoke up Colonel Crockett, "for cotton will do as well."

"Do better," interposed a Georgian standing by, "'cause cotton is gwine ter be th' emblem of this country."

When a white star had been cut, Joséfa rapidly sewed it in the center of the flag.

"Let's brand it now with our own name," suggested a ranchman, "so it can not be blotted out, for we will never be a maverick of Mexico."

Whereupon with a crudely sharpened stick, at the points of the star, were inscribed the letters:

T-E-X-A-S.

And when the flag was run up and unfurled itself to the breezes, the garrison of the Alamo gave a shout loud and long for *The Lone Star!*

The men within the fort now numbered one hundred and seventy-six, due to the arrival from Gonzales of thirty volunteers. In welcoming them Davy Crockett said:

"I wish instead of you being thirty, you was a thousand, for the Mexicans are getting as plentiful around the Alamo as pigtracks 'round a corncrib."

"'Tis a pity," he added, "you didn't bring your victuals with you, for rations are gitting short, as food is powerful scarce with us; but I reckon 'fore long we'll all git our bellies full of fighting."

Then noting the expression on some of the younger men's faces, he sought to cheer them by saying:

"But such is war! Come, lads, let's take a drink all round, for ther's nothing like a swig of red-eye to keep up courage—here's my flask." And the volunteers drank to the liberty of Texas, the damnation of Santa Anna, and long life to David Crockett.

A message of the Alamo's condition Travis had meanwhile dispatched to Colonel Fannin, who com-

manded the Goliad garrison, two hundred miles away. Bonham and the old pirate braved the dangers of carrying that appeal. In response to Travis's petition for help Fannin and his men started to his relief, but were destined never to reach Bexar, for soon after leaving Goliad their ammunition wagons broke down and their artillery could not be gotten across the swollen river, hence they turned back. Bonham and his companion had, however, already gone on ahead, though they knew to return meant most probably certain death, but the South Carolinian declared:

"I will report to Travis or die in the attempt!"

And the old pirate, who had scorned death in many a gale, his voice vibrant with feeling, exclaimed with a burst of profanity:

"Aye, aye, when the Alamo needs us, we ain't going to crawl 'neath the hatches, but stand by the foremast till the brig goes down!"

CHAPTER XII

THE SPY

A crocus light, such as comes in the sky when the chilly winds of springtime lull toward the sunset hour, shone now like a halo of glory above the Alamo.

At the gate of the presidio stood a woman pleading to be admitted; but the sentinel, a man named Rose, a Frenchman from Louisiana, refused to admit her.

Her bright eyes shone like coals of fire under the mantilla carelessly thrown over her head. Excitement brought to her face a flush that dyed her cheeks with the deep red glow of an autumn leaf. Though with a voice soft as witchery she coaxed permission to enter, the guard was inexorable. When it comes to a woman having her way, however, beauty is a great abettor to wit, and instead of Niña's being summarily dismissed, Rose, attracted by her appearance, allowed her to talk. Then that weapon which but few females can not use to advantage came to her succor, and at his denial great tears gathered in her eyes. She begged, she pleaded, she entreated; she threw herself at his feet and besought him to let her carry the dying message of a noble man to one who was to him like unto a child.

When Rose understood her Mexican sufficiently to comprehend that of Father Clement she was talking, his heart began to weaken. He knew the Priest well. Being of the same nationality, they had often talked together of France and the wars of the Little Corporal. It was different now, his decision to refuse her. Sympathy made him waver and rock, so that soon he drifted from his moorings and allowed her request.

Niña, being ushered into the presence of Travis, told just the tale that would have delighted Santa Anna could he have heard, picturing the legions of Mexicans that had been arriving daily; telling how she had overheard Colonel Almonte say that already they numbered several thousand strong. In a melodramatic way she graphically described the story hatched by Castrillo—of how the drunken soldiers, seeking to establish Santa Anna's quarters in the House of the Priest, being remonstrated with by Father Clement, had shot him, not knowing he was a priest of the Church. She told how it was his wish and earnest prayer that he might see Joséfa to give her his blessing ere death came as a relief from the pain torturing his frame.

Niña was splendid in her rôle.

Of all who heard, none doubted the truth of her speech. Joséfa, overwhelmed, had fainted in Mother Dickinson's arms. While such simple remedies as circumstances allowed were being used to restore her, Niña was carefully taking in the condition of the fort. Her large, black eyes, flashing constantly, magnetized those who looked at her;

bright, searching, nothing escaped her lynx-like glance. She noted the south wall of the church was the weak point in the fortification. With a rapid survey she summed up the garrison almost to a man.

Mother Dickinson was very sorrowful to see Joséfa set forth, for the girl had strangely entwined herself about the affections of the big-hearted frontierswoman. Rapidly the two crossed the courtyard; Nifía, moving with the swift, lithe grace of a tiger, urged Joséfa to hurry lest she be too late; but the mental anguish of the señorita was such that her feet seemed to drag the earth. When they had left the gate of the Alamo a safe distance behind them, as they neared some cottonwood bushes, a figure stepped forth from the shadow. The silver glow from a new-born moon gleamed down on his golden epaulettes and scintillated in tiny rays from his sword, while a voice that Joséfa knew only too well as belonging to Castrillo, breathed: "Thank God you have come, my own precious darling!" And he sought to embrace her, for the anxiety of waiting, with the relief of suspense and the rapturous delight of seeing her, scattered caution to the wind.

At sight of him, Joséfa's face blanched; a sickening sensation made it impossible for her to scream or move just then, for she was stunned. Swift as lightning flashed the truth upon her mind that she had been duped, that Father Clement had not sent for her, that she had been cruelly deceived to become the prey of this man. Oh! the mockery of it all; what a fool she had been ever to believe the words of Nifía; and a laugh broke from her lips that cur-

dled the love in Castrillo's veins to hate, transforming him from a lover to a satyr.

"So you have come, my *chiquita*, as soon as Niña told you I was here." And he leered at her with a look that was in itself an insult. "Thank you, Niña, you are a most excellent messenger, and I shall reward you as you deserve. But go now, for this little prairie flower is too modest to give me the reception I crave while another is near."

As soon as the *mestiza* disappeared, his mood changed.

"Come now," he said in a wheedling voice, "are you not glad to see me? My heart leaps at the sight of you, for I still love you, Joséfa, as passionately and devotedly as the night on the plaza when you scorned my love. My darling," his tone was all tenderness, "you are angry with me for having enticed you out of the Alamo; for having, as you doubtless deem, deceived you. But how was I to save you any other way?" His voice quivered with its weight of entreaty. "O my love! if you only knew the torture I endured at the risk you were running being shut up in that hole, you would forgive me. These are not times to consider methods, every moment counts; you need the protecting care of my love. Come to my arms, Joséfa, be mine and let me shield you."

Joséfa had by this time recovered herself, for she was not of the stuff that melts at the touch of adversity.

"Stand back!" she commanded, "you that call yourself a man. If no pity moves your heart for me, what of your wife?"

Castrillo recoiled.

"My wife?" he repeated incredulously.

"Yes, your wife. I know that you have married the sister of General Santa Anna."

"It is a mistake," declared Castrillo. "True," he ~~added~~, "I ~~have paid~~ court to the sister of Santa Anna, simply for army ~~advancement~~; but you, Joséfa, you, you only are the woman I love, ~~the woman~~ I want, the woman I mean to wed."

"That you will never do!" she vowed so defiantly that Castrillo's passion got the better of him.

"Not marry me!" he exclaimed. "You are mine now, irrevocably mine, without the trouble of a priest's blessing. All San Antonio will know you came out of the fort at my bidding with the messenger I sent. Durst say that already Niña has spread the news. Come," he urged, "or you will give me the extra pleasure of carrying you. He stepped closer.

"You are a scoundrel!" Joséfa cried; "but I do not fear you, for God will take care of me."

A hot flush of shame suffused her cheeks, spreading down her throat, for her bodice had been unloosened when she fainted in the Alamo, and showed how her heart swelled with indignation.

"By Jove, you are splendid when you look like that!" said Castrillo, who, like a beast that had caught its prey, seemed to gloat over the promised feast, as he added:

"I don't believe there is another piece of flesh and blood like you in all Mexico, and I mean to have you, spit-fire that you are, for my very own."

But the girl did not hear his last words, for she had broken into a run toward the fort. She was fleet of foot and terror lent wings to her speed. Before Castrillo scarcely realized she had started, quite a space divided them. Then, while a mocking laugh sounded on the air, he pursued, entering the chase as one who, certain of victory, ~~makes believe~~ he is really in earnest, ~~but looks~~ on it in the light of play.

Just then the sound of horses' hoofs floated on the stillness of the plain.

"What devils are these, racing at night?" he said to himself, and swore unsparingly.

Closer and closer the sound came of hurrying steed—not one, but many. It was Bonham and the old pirate returning from Goliad, and another rider, evidently an *Americano*, was with them. In fact he seemed to be leading them. His horse's hoofs hardly touched the ground as he came on in a rushing gallop. The poor animal was lathered in sweat and blood from the cruel spurs necessity compelled to be used. The old pirate and Bonham, though riding like the wind, were several paces behind; and pressing them sore was a squad of Mexican cavalry. This Castrillo could distinguish by their uniforms, so that he now strained every muscle in desperate pursuit of Joséfa.

Already the garrison of the Alamo had spied them.

Crockett called to the bee-hunter:

"Bless my Betsy! if one of them ain't the old pirate."

Then other voices exclaimed in unison :

"It's Bonham! It's the pirate! It's them! Hurrah for their grit!"

"Three cheers for the pirate!"

"Three cheers for Bonham!"

"If they never reach the Alamo," said Bowie, "it will tell 'em we appreciated their effort."

"But," remonstrated Crockett, whose habit was to judge keenly and act quickly, "them damn Mexicans are trying to head 'em off from the gate; and there's a woman, a gal a-running too; come quick, boys, let's to their rescue!"

And suiting his action to his words, David Crockett, followed by a body of men, sallied out of the fort. As he emerged, a piercing scream, like the wail of a broken heart, reached his ears. It came from Joséfa, who, when only a few yards separated her from the gate of the Alamo, had been overtaken and violently seized by Castrillo.

"Help, help!" she shrieked.

And the Tennessean, responded, recognizing the supplicant as the girl who had made the flag. He who could whip his weight in wildcats now pounded Castrillo as only a cur would have deserved. Joséfa, meanwhile, too exhausted to move, sunk to the ground.

The moon lit up the scene with a bluish light, so that though all the faces were plainly recognizable, yet the figures moving in the skirmish looked as weird as phantoms.

The unknown rider was the first to reach the girl. Crockett had never seen him before, and occupied as

he was in battling with Castrillo, did not notice him specially, save that he was an American, young and well-built. With that supernatural strength that oft-times asserts itself in time of stress, the stranger leaned from his saddle and clutched the señorita, then his eyes flashing and setting his teeth hard, he dug his long rowels deep into his horse's sides and rushed on toward the fort, like a Roman might have borne off a Sabine.

Joséfa, finding herself plucked from the prairie like a flower, nestled close to her deliverer; there was something possessive in his clasp—a tenderness with which the strong arm went around her slender waist. She lifted her eyes to his face, trying to breathe her thanks—and then her head dropped on his shoulder, for recognition of him made her swoon.

It was Charles Dabney.

The shout that greeted the Virginian as he rode in the Alamo with Joséfa was hushed as the little garrison beheld several men bringing one wounded within the fort.

"Is it Colonel Crockett?" asked Joséfa, who, though she was recovering, still seemed dazed.

"Naw, honey, here's Davy, with only a scratch to mar his beauty; but it don't matter so long as I helped to save you." And with his deer-skin sleeve Crockett wiped the blood trickling from the sabre slash Castrillo had left on his leathery, wrinkled forehead.

"I see Colonel Bonham," exclaimed Mother Dickinson, "but where is the old pirate?"

"Yonder," and a volunteer nodded to where the men had laid him.

"Is he suffering much pain?" she asked sympathetically.

"No, madam, but the old pirate has gone on his last voyage."

"Let us hope to the haven of rest," added Travis, who had drawn near, "for I am inclined to believe that when a man dies fighting he receives a soldier's reward, as peace follows strife."

It was hard for Joséfa to realize Dabney was again with her. It seemed too good to be true; to have him so near; to feel the sympathy of his comfort—and yet a terrible foreboding that his return might mean his death crept into her heart, turning her joy to pain. His manner to her was tenderness itself. He realized the siege of the Alamo would be as great as any history had ever witnessed, and the desire to see it through burned in his heart like a spark from the altar of patriotism. This longing to fight for Texas, to be a participant in her battles, to give, if need be, his life to the cause of liberty, had made Dabney leave Austin and the other commissioners, when at New Orleans he had heard from a vessel from Vera Cruz of Santa Anna's purpose to immediately invade Texas; and so it happened that, nearing San Antonio, he had fallen in with Bonham. Dabney had not counted on the contingency of Joséfa's being in peril. But since Castrillo had so boldly tried to gain possession of her, the Virginian could appreciate the Priest's wisdom in placing her in the Alamo under Mother Dickinson's care. The

thought of what would happen to her if the fort fell or if he were killed in helping to defend it made him shiver in agony, made him desperate; and yet he tried to hide his fears from Joséfa, who, child-like, had begun to believe that since he, her hero, had come, all would be well. Her despondency was vanishing; her face was beginning to resume its fresh beauty as love dominated her expression.

Her trusting faith touched Dabney deeply, enduing him with renewed strength, for as the soldiers talked of the probability of the Mexicans early storming the fort, she had snuggled up close beside him, and slipping her tremulous little brown hand in his, whispered:

"Carlos, you will take care of me, you are not afraid?"

And though the reply rose to his lips that his only fear was for her, he did not utter it—but simply stooped and kissed the black hair that shone with metallic lustre against her pale forehead.

The sure realization of doom, though, unless aid soon reached them, was settling down to a grim certainty within every breast. Travis, daily expecting the Goliad garrison to come to his relief, tried to encourage his men; albeit now they were beginning to fear a foe within the camp as terrible as the besieging Mexicans. It was starvation. Their situation was growing desperate, and so the commander decided to send another appeal for succor. It was then he wrote the letter that has come down to posterity as a priceless legacy, because the valor of the sentiment the author sustained:

COMMANDANCY OF THE ALAMO, BEJAR, 1836.

To the People of Texas and all Americans in the world,

Fellow citizens & Compatriots—I am besieged, by a thousand or more of Mexicans under Santa Anna. The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken—I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, & our flag still waves proudly from the walls—I shall never *surrender or retreat*. Then I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism, & everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all despatch—The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily and will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in a few days. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible & die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor & that of his country—VICTORY or DEATH.

WILLIAM BARRET TRAVIS,
Lt.-Col. Comdt.

Charles Dabney was the man who volunteered to take that letter to Sam Houston, who was at Washington on the Brazos.

“He’s gwine to lose his scalp ter a sartainty,” predicted a frontiersman as he watched the Virginian go out of the gate.

“The Mexicans will hack him to pieces before they’ll let him through their lines,” prophesied Captain Dickinson. But he was wrong, for Santa Anna, hoping that Travis had an idea of coming out of the fort, had issued instructions that any scouts from the Alamo were to pass his picket-guard unhailed; for the crafty despot preferred fighting the Texans on the plains to storming the presidio. It must be remembered that Dabney did not know this, lest it diminish his daring. He felt that everything depended on that message being carried. He felt that

the man who took it would have no further need for fame. He felt, and this was the strongest reason, that it offered the only possibility of saving Joséfa—whom he loved more than country, more than glory, more than himself. And so he set forth, calmly and fearlessly, having mastered himself in his thought for others.

The hours dragged by drear and desolate after he left. Joséfa, miserable with an indescribable loneliness, counted the minutes in watching for Dabney's return. She comforted herself by remembering that Bonham had returned from Goliad—and by believing that Carlos Daubigney, her lover, her hero, could do what other men did, yea, excel them.

The señorita spent most of her time in the little convent-room set aside for their use. With Mother Dickinson, the little daughter, and old Clinch she did not feel the brooding melancholy that hung over the fort; the heavy, painful atmosphere of imminent danger that was beginning to tell on the soldiers' spirits. Even David Crockett, who had done so much to keep the Texans cheerful by preventing them from dwelling on the fatality of their position, was beginning to feel that hope was useless, was futile, was vain. Looking at the walls of the Alamo, he said:

"Santy Anny has got us shut up like birds in a cage, and I ain't used to being hemmed in; I think we had better march out and die in the open." Then his joke-telling humor seized him so irrepressibly that a grim smile lit up his face as he continued:

"Boys, I've got a tale to tell you, a tale that will illustrate our condition. It happened once a man called his son and said, 'Jim, go drive them pigs out of my gyarden,' and Jim went, but his legs wa'n't long 'nough to chase them pigs out. When he come back his pap said, 'Jim, you didn't drive them pigs out.' 'No,' answered the son, 'I couldn't; they was too many for me, but I set the dawgs a-barking.' Well, fellows, we are like Jim—maybe our strength, like his legs, won't be long enough to hold out against these damn hogs whar want everything; but by our example we can set the dogs of war to barking so they will run every last Greaser out of this here land that's beautiful as a garden."

While Crockett spoke, his words reverberated through the old monastery like a message from some prophet whose insight into the future was most true.

CHAPTER XIII

OVER THE LINE

When the sortie was over, and Joséfa, with her rescuers, had disappeared within the Alamo, Castrillo glared after them like a mad beast. He felt like a gambler who had staked all and lost. The cup had been snatched from his grasp when he thought to satisfy the thirst that had long been consuming him. His heart ached bitterly. Disappointed passion, jealousy, and a desire for revenge burned in his breast. Hatred of the *Americanos* had cankered until it poisoned his soul, so that his humor was murderous.

Passing the Mexican tents pitched in the Military Plaza, he entered the House of the Priest, to find Santa Anna had called a council of war.

"Come in, Castrillo. Where have you been? Reconnoitering, eh?" asked a volley of voices.

"Where is the woman?" inquired Santa Anna, meaning Niña.

"You can count on Castrillo's always being mixed up with some woman," one of the officers said aside, as he winked his eye in an insinuating way.

"I thought to find her here, General; she preceded me," was Castrillo's reply.

"If you are speaking of a *mestiza*, she has been waiting here for an hour or more," spoke up Almonte.

Niña was then summoned and told all she knew.

"And the fools not only let you enter the fort, but come out, did they?" queried Santa Anna.

She bowed in acquiescence.

"They are mere children at war!" he sneered contemptuously; "*malditos seun*, curse them!" Then addressing Castrillo he said, "And where is the other woman?"

"Another?" and the men laughed uproariously.

"I fail to perceive the cause of your mirth," snapped Castrillo, whose feelings were in a state of ferment.

"Usually sir," whispered Father Clement close in his ear, for unobserved the Priest had taken his stand behind Castrillo's chair, "the Devil plans more successfully, for despite the woman's assistance, the fruit remains forbidden."

Castrillo smothered an oath as he cleared his throat and spat upon the floor. Then biting his moustache, he turned to Santa Anna, saying:

"General, as I understand it, this is a council of war. I will therefore, with your permission, request the withdrawal of this priest, as reasons for privacy demand it."

The expression of intense hatred that shone on the Jesuit's countenance was only matched by the scorn in his voice as, shaking a sinewy forefinger in Castrillo's face, he hissed:

"Yes, you cursed debauchee, not reasons for privacy but *private* reasons why you demand it." And with an air of contempt that only a Frenchman can assume, Father Clement shrugged his shoulders and was gone.

The discussions of the generals now became most animated. The delight manifested by Santa Anna as he listened to Niña lit up his ugly face with anticipation such as shines in a wolf's eye at the smell of blood.

"Castrillo," he said, "you have played a difficult rôle well; you are the man who has divined what's necessary to know; I title you chief of spies."

Whereupon, taking advantage of the favor he had gained, Castrillo counseled Santa Anna not to immediately attack the Alamo. A delay would afford time in which to devise some other means to rescue Joséfa, whom he loved more passionately than ever before for having been thwarted in possessing her. The idea of storming the Alamo sent shivers through his frame. It was unbearable! And he could not endure hearing it discussed, having just parted with Joséfa. The thought of a stray bullet piercing her lovely breast froze the blood in Castrillo's veins. The hope of yet winning the girl flickered still in his heart. His wish to save Joséfa was purely selfish. He desired her for his own pleasure rather than her welfare. It would be sweet to him to have her live—and be his.

Surely, surely, Santa Anna argued, with his army, now five thousand strong, he could annihilate a garrison of less than two hundred.

"Five thousand to whip ten score!" sneered Castrillo under his breath; "Santa Anna hardly arrogates to himself military ability." Aloud he said: "General, we men who have intimate knowledge of these Texan hounds know they are hard to lick. They fight as freemen and not like our convict recruits. I again advise delay."

But Santa Anna's exorbitant opinion of his own judgment scoffed at the idea; his arrogance asserted itself, hard, aggressive, malignant.

"No, by the Mother of God!" he exclaimed, "we will drown rebellion in blood. For eight days we have been here practically doing nothing but giving these rebels time to eat up their victuals and repent of their folly, which they seem not to have done. I wish this affair soon settled so that I may return to Mexico. Conditions there are not as quiet as I might wish. I have sent orders for Urrea to march against the upstarts garrisoned at Goliad."

"Urrea!" exclaimed Castrillo.

"Yes, Ramon Urrea; he is familiar with this territory."

"*Cierto!*" exclaimed Castrillo, casting a glance at Niña, "he knows this country as a lover knows the lines of his mistress's face."

"And," continued Santa Anna, "he will make short work of any nasty jobs. By the by, did you succeed in getting his niece out of the Alamo?"

"No, she started and then turned back."

"Well, like other fools she may pay for her folly."

"I fear so." Castrillo's voice was bitter and his eyes gleamed like steel.

Santa Anna then disclosed to his generals his determination to forthwith storm the fort; and no argument could prevail to alter his decision.

The Mexicans accordingly began a slow bombardment. Travis cautioned his men not to waste their ammunition in replying, advice which Davy Crockett seconded, saying:

"'Tain't no use to kick till the spur begins to hurt."

"But," said Bowie, "I 'spect they'll think we are all asleep over here."

"Well," answered Travis, "the boys can fire one shot to show we are not napping."

Strange to relate, that shot struck the House of the Priest.

"Pretty good!" exclaimed Davy Crockett when he heard of it. "We'll let old Santy know in the beginning that when we shoot, we shoot to hit. Their popping away reminds me of Fourth of July doings back in the States."

"I hope," interposed Bonham, "it signifies the establishment of our independence; but, bless my soul! what are the Mexicans doing now?"

"Planting batteries," observed Travis, whose look was stern and implacable. "Boys," he cried, "don't let this vex you into wasting good powder; just wait, and when the time comes, make 'em dance."

Soon Captain Dickinson hurried into the old church, saying:

"The Mexicans have planted a battery between the Alamo and the bridge over the San 'Tone river;

another on the Gonzales road; a third north of the fort."

"Which means," interrupted Bowie, "they are aiming not only to prevent the possibility of aid reaching us, but are trying to cut off our water supply."

Evening was fast closing in, gray and heavy laden. Night soon came on—a dark, black night, without a star of hope.

No relief had come to the Alamo.

That obstinate and determined valor that perishes but yields not, alone sustained the little garrison. The anxiety was telling on their nerves; the suspense became agonizing as it was prolonged; they longed for the fray to begin; albeit not one deceived himself as to how it would end.

When the sable curtains were drawn aside and rosy and pink the new-born moon stood upon the threshold of another day, the Mexicans, growing bolder, planted a battery within gunshot distance giving the opportunity for marksmanship for which the wily Texans had waited. They soon began a brisk cannonading against the side of the church where David Crockett was asleep, causing him to stop snoring, mount the rampart, and begin shooting. The enemy's cannon was charged again and a Mexican stepped forth to touch her off; before he could do so, David's "Betsy" clicked and the man tottered to the ground. Another soldier tried, and the Tennessean's deadly marksmanship again proved true, and the Mexican fell by his comrade, the blood spurting from his breast. Still a third

attempt was made, and the Greaser bit the dust; so after Crockett's unerring aim had laid five Mexicans low, no further attempt was made to fire their gun.

"It will teach 'em a lesson," drawled the bear-hunter, smilingly smothering a yawn. "to be more keerful 'bout disturbing ole Davy's morning nap—for back in Tennessee thar's plenty to tell what a bead on my Betsy means."

He slapped the juggler on the back, adding: "If sights like this sicken your stomach, come join me in my bitters, and whet up yer appetite for breakfast."

The elements seemed in accord with the storm of war that was about to burst upon the fort; for the sky was threatening, the air cool and bleak, while the wind whistled that doleful half-croon, half-growl that every Texan knows means a Norther.

"If this weather keeps on," said Bonham, shivering, "Santa Anna's torrid fervor will be sweating icicles."

That Saturday, March the fifth, David Crockett wrote in his diary:

"Pop! pop! pop! bom! bom! bom! No time for memorandums now. GO AHEAD. LIBERTY and INDEPENDENCE FOREVER!"

All day, shot had been dropping viciously within the fort's yard. Travis knew the slow bombardment heralded the storming of the Alamo, for the siege had lasted now nine days. When night approached, bringing no tidings of Fannin, no relief from Houston, the intrepid Travis, fully realizing all hope was lost, now called his men before him, for the brave commander wished to define, to explain

his motives, his position, to every soldier who was to fight.

"Garrison of the Alamo," he said, "our fate is sealed. Within a few hours we shall be in eternity. I had hoped victory would be ours; but that is impossible, since no help has come to our assistance. We will not, however, censure, as we know not what cause prevented their arrival, for if our friends knew of our perilous condition they would try to save us. As it is, we must die. I am not here to command any one, for heroism is the result of free will."

And stooping down he drew with his sword's point a line on the ground, as he added:

"Now is the opportunity given for him who wishes to die a hero to cross this line."

The first to step over was Tapley Holland, the quartermaster, saying:

"I am ready to die for my country."

Next, with a yell, "Be sure you are right, then go ahead," Davy Crockett leaped across.

A feeble voice was now heard calling from the sick-room:

"I can't git thar myself, so some of you boys lift me over." And James Bowie's cot was accordingly borne across the hero line.

One by one the garrison stepped over. By the pale, flickering light within the old church each man appeared taller as he did so, until the little band seemed transformed into a group of giants. Only one man, Rose, the Frenchman, remained on the other side. "I am not prepared to die," he said, as

if excusing himself, "and shall not do so if I can help it."

At his words a contemptuous look gathered on many a sunburnt brow, but no one reproached him, for Travis, seeing how his men rallied around him, had begun to speak again.

"Your action nerves me to greater courage," he said. "We will do and die. Had you preferred to surrender, the Mexicans would have shot you like dogs. Had I attempted to lead you from the Alamo, it would have been simply leading you to butchery; as it is, we will put the price of victory high."

"Let us make the Alamo the altar of Texas' freedom."

"When the Mexicans storm the fort, let us kill them as they come! Kill them as they scale the walls! Kill them as they leap within! Kill them as they raise their weapons! Kill them as they kill our companions! And kill them as they kill us! Then what matters that our lives are lost if Texas be baptized with blood into the creed of liberty? Posterity will cherish our sacrifice till all history shall be erased and all noble deeds shall be forgotten."

"Amen!" said Bonham; while the little garrison, too overwhelmed to cheer, silently scattered to their posts.

Crockett and his friend, the juggler, moving off together, spied a man mounting the wall. Seeing it was Rose, Davy called out:

"If you couldn't be a hero, don't be a traitor!"

Rose put his hand over his mouth in token that he heard, and then leaped.

Looking after him, the Tennessean remarked:

"That man said he wa'n't prepared to die, like who of us ever is. When I was a lad and was a hired boy in the Valley of Virginia, I knew of an old Dutchman who used to go crazy, imagining himself the Lord Almighty. So he built a throne on which he'd sit in judgment. One day I heard him trying himself.

"Now ich try meinsel.' said he.

"'Vat hash you bin doin' in dis lower world?"

"Ah! mein Got, ich does not know."

"'Vell, Heinrich Snyder, ain't you got a mill?"

"'Yes, Lord, ich has."

"'Vell, Heinrich, didn't you never take too much toll?"

"'Mein Got, yes, ven der vater vash low and mein stone was dull, ich has taken a leetle too much."

"'But Heinrich Snyder, vat did you do vid dat toll?"

"'Lord, ich gives it to der poor."

"'Vell, Heinrich, you can go to de right vid my sheep, but 'tis a tight squeeze."

"And," added David, "I know I ain't lived faultless, and like that old Dutchman, if I ever get to heaven, it will be a tight squeeze; for if my own righteousness is to take me I'll never git thar at all; but God who takes care of the sparrows ain't above looking after a critter like me."

The bear-hunter now began oiling up "Betsy." Looking lovingly at the rifle, he said :

"For just one crack at that devil Santy Anny, I would bargain to break my 'Betsy' and never pull trigger again." Then with a glance at the juggler, he added : "My name is not Crockett if I wouldn't get glory enough from it to appease my stomach for the rest of my life."

Just as the faint light began to break in the east, a loud, long bugle note from the Mexican cavalry announced the day long waited for had dawned. The bloodthirsty "Duquelo," that martial air that meant no quarter, floating on the stillness of the Bexar plain, rallied not only the Mexicans, but notified the Texans as well.

Within the Alamo there was much hurrying. Every man feeling loyal to liberty's cause was soon at his post, ready to die in the performance of duty. The approach of danger nerved their soldier hearts ; it was a superb show of zeal. Travis gave his orders like one born to command, cautioning his men not to waste their ammunition. Independent and undisciplined as the garrison was, they recognized he was right and obeyed ; though like war horses chafing the bit on the verge of battle, they longed for the fight to begin.

Santa Anna was mustering his forces for immediate attack. A cordon of Mexican cavalry at a wide range encircled the Alamo, serving the purpose of making it impossible for either the Texans to retreat or to receive help, and at the same time warding

against the probability of Santa Anna's foot soldiers running away.

A regiment of his infantry advanced at double-quick; the guns of the Alamo flashed fire, sweeping them as dry leaves are swept by an autumn wind. The air was filled with bursting shells. The dead lay so thick the living trod upon them.

"They are devil marksmen," was Santa Anna's comment.

By entreaties, promises and threats, the Dictator urged on his men, for storming the Alamo was no easy task, as from every porthole hummed bullets like mad wasps. The Mexican convict recruits had been put in front and paved the way with their dead bodies. Now a brigade of the flower of the army made a headlong rush for the low wall surrounding the presidio; but the shells of the Texans tore them to pieces and the shattered remnant fell back in great confusion.

Santa Annas' ambition was costing the Mexican nation much blood.

Meanwhile an officer in a green uniform, heavily trimmed with gold lace, rode recklessly on the outskirts of the cavalry under his command. This was Castrillo, who had withdrawn as far as possible from the scene. He was desperate. With him the soldiers were not firing at the Alamo, but Joséfa. The crisis grew more acute as the minutes dragged on. Castrillo felt crazed; his thoughts were beyond all human endurance; he longed to die. Before his vision rose the picture of the señorita's body riddled with bullets,

Boom! boom! bo-om!

Rapid reports followed flash after flash. The cannon shook the earth with their discharges.

Yet there was nothing Castrillo could do amidst infantry advancing, galloping batteries and columns of cavalry. He cursed his fate. He cursed his love. He cursed Joséfa. He cursed the *Americanos*, on whom he swore to wreak his vengeance for her death. Fury seized him as a spasm and passed away, leaving him chill; for a cheer went up from the Mexicans that sent torture to his soul. The anticipation he had dreaded had now become a terrible reality. He could hear the officers shouting:

"Forward! forward!"

Armed with crowbars, scaling ladders and fire-arms, the Mexicans twice stormed the wall, twice to meet a deadly repulse.

"Give it to them in the eyes, boys," shouted Travis, and the Texan bullets hummed, singing their death song.

Urged and driven on by their officers, the Mexicans dared another assault. Their screaming, yelling and hooting made a chorus that sounded like the roar of wild beasts. Cold drops of sweat broke out on Castrillo's forehead, and though he still managed to sit his horse, he was as one in a trance, hearing nothing, seeing nothing—save Joséfa Urra, whom only a miracle could now save, or the Power Supreme.

The señorita, with Mother Dickinson, had taken refuge in the convent-room. A great change had come over Joséfa, who, quivering with excitement,

trembled from head to foot. The moment had made her a woman. There was no weeping, no wringing of hands, no crying out against fate. The sounds from without foreboded an assault, a desperate struggle, a massacre. Suddenly Captain Dickinson burst in upon them, saying:

"Great God! Sue, the Mexicans are inside our walls—all is lost." And hurriedly kissing wife and child farewell, he hastened back to the fight. Clinch, who had been lying at Joséfa's feet, bounded after him.

Hearing what he said, the girl fell to her knees, imploring the Blessed Virgin to save them, while Mother Dickinson, with a prayer in her heart, watched her husband as long as he was in view, then pressing her child to her bosom, she lifted her eyes and faintly whispered:

"O Lord God of battles, help us!"

The surging throng, the swarming soldiers were filling the presidio.

The din of battle roared in their ears. Nearer the women huddled together, for the mutterings, curses and clamorings of the struggling mingled with the groans and shrieks of the dying.

"Kill them as they come!" shouted Travis. Just then a Mexican ball wounded him mortally. He tottered on the rampart, his musket fell from his hand and a Mexican tried to cut off his head with his sabre. With that sudden burst of strength that sometimes comes to the dying, Travis seized his sword and sheathed it in the heart of his assailant, while with the cry: "*No rendirse muchachos*, don't

surrender, boys!" the commander of the Alamo fell to be "*enrolled with Leonidas in the list of the mighty dead.*"*

Like a swarm of locusts the brown faces came pouring into the old church. So crowded was the garrison it was impossible to shoot, so in hand-to-hand combat they fought, using their rifles as clubs.

The Mexicans seized the cannon near the gateway which Travis had died defending, and turned it upon the fort. The Americans defended themselves like wild beasts, glutting their hatred and vengeance. Concentrated contempt shone on their stern countenances as they grappled with the foe. The air was sulphurous. The Mexicans were everywhere. Swart faces and stalwart forms went down together. Cool and desperate, Bowie stretched upon his cot, like a tiger in his lair, awaited his fate, and when the Mexicans came he fought them back until the floor of his small room was strewn with dead men. His strength then failing, a Greaser succeeded in giving him his death-wound, but as he did so the sick man plunged his bowie-knife in him to the hilt, so that they died together. Truly, Bowie had won his right to crossing over the hero line.

The Mexicans continued to rush in. Bonham had fallen in the fray, and only David Crockett, Major Evans, the juggler, and the bee-hunter were pitted against the army of Santa Anna—but the Texans were game to the last. Crockett stood like a giant oak battling with a hurricane—his arms struck out, one hand clutching his shattered "Betsy," the other

holding his bowie-knife dripping with blood; his eyes, deep sunk, glaring like burning coals.

"Fire the magazine!" he yelled to Evans, who started to do so, but was butchered in the attempt.

Blackened with powder stains, now the little band of three seemed like Cerebus guarding the Alamo, which had become a hell on earth.

Santa Anna, thinking the struggle over, appeared on the scene, his face beaming, his happiness supreme. The sight of him infuriated Crockett to frenzy. It was the white heat, the flameless, consuming fury of anthracite. With blood spurting from his forehead, where Castrillo's sabre wound had been torn open afresh, the man who "could whip his weight in wild cats" sprang at the throat of the Dictator, but sixty hands were raised to beat him off. The juggler, in trying to defend his friend, went down, his knife deep in the breast of the Mexican who had attacked him. Thus was slain David Crockett, the bear hunter, the wit, the inimitable, the statesman, the patriot, the hero. The Mexicans mutilated his body and spat upon it, but it mattered not, for Crockett's soul had gone home "*to the God of the fearless and free.*"*

None of the soldiers had as yet broken in the little convent-room where the women were, until Colonel Almonte pushed open the door and asked in good English, for Mrs. Dickinson, adding: "If you wish to save your life, come with me."

She arose to obey and Joséfa followed. When they reached the doorway an arm stretched forth and the voice of Father Clement warned Joséfa in a

whisper not to follow. So alone, save that she carried her child, Mother Dickinson was ushered into the presence of Santa Anna. The Savior and Preserver of Mexico was in a good humor. Deeming his victory complete, the murderer was anxious that the news of his gory crime should spread. Hence Mother Dickinson and her child were placed on a horse, and with an insolent message from the Dictator she was ordered to carry the tidings of the carnage to the Texan colonists.

In the convent-room Father Clement had taken off his cassock and wrapped Joséfa in it. Picking up a sombrero he pulled it down over the girl's hair, nearly covering her face. Thus disguised she did not look like a female. As the two stole out of the fort Joséfa's glance was attracted by a low, mournful whine full of distress. It came from Clinch, who, sniffing among the dead, had found his master's body. The Priest, noticing whose corpse it was, said, "God rest his soul!" as he hurried by. A Mexican also passing, stopped, put the muzzle of his *escopeta* close to the dog's head and fired, saying: "See me kill the last damn dog of an *Americano!*" Then he laughed uproariously at his own wit.

The scene in the Alamo was a sight too horrible for words to describe. The dead lay everywhere; the waters of the *acéquias* ran with blood. Santa Anna, viewing the slain, gloated over the butchery; his wolf-like taste thirsted for more. The sanguinary spectacle whetted his appetite, for his vengeance was not yet satisfied. The garrison being dead sufficed not; their utter annihilation alone could appease him.

"Castrillo," he said, "how many do the slain number?"

But no answer came, for the man addressed seemed without the power of speech. His face was ashen, his breath spasmodic, his eyes riveted on vacancy. Almonte, noticing Castrillo's state of collapse, quickly replied for him, saying:

"Excuse me, General, but Castrillo is not in a position to know, as he was with the cavalry guarding the outposts, and has not as yet been within the fort, so I expect I can answer more accurately than he. I think fifteen hundred, or at the limit sixteen hundred, will cover our loss, while the defenders of the Alamo were said to be about two hundred."

"But, *caramba!* not a man of the entire garrison remains!" ejaculated Santa Anna, seeming altogether to forget the price of his victory. "Our soldiers must be buried with the honors of war," he continued, "but an example shall be made of these rebel Texans. See to it, Castrillo, that their bodies are burned—a layer of wood and a layer of corpses; make a pyramid out of them; ha, ha!" And the laugh breaking from his lips was so demoniacal that it aroused Castrillo from his lethargy.

Ceaselessly, like the wheels of Ixion, his thoughts revolved always on the fate of Joséfa. That she was dead he never doubted, so he never asked. It was needless for any one to tell him that he had seen her so. Castrillo's fancy could picture her lips, twin roses turned to lilies under the icy touch of death; her bright eyes closed forever 'neath their long silken lashes; or were they shut or did they look up, set in

a last appeal for mercy? After all, who was her murderer—was it not Santa Anna? Loathing and contempt for the Dictator filled him. He knew Santa Anna was playing this game solely for his own ambition—and he, Juan Castrillo, would cease to be a pawn in his hand. Before now he had echoed Santa Anna's patriotism, sympathized with him in his schemes, lent an ear to his plots. Now he hated him and longed for his overthrow. One nail could drive out another. Why not? It had done so before. He, Juan Castrillo, might seize the reins of government and rule Mexico. No, he was dreaming; he was beside himself; grief had crazed him. Santa Anna was first in power, but could not Castrillo be second? Ambition whispered to him to be cautious, to be patient, to wed the Dictator's sister, and by becoming a member of his household be the power behind the throne—until—until the hour was ripe to cast aside the puppet; but in the meantime he must obey. His head ached, but he shook himself together and went forth to carry out Santa Anna's command to burn the corpses of the garrison of the Alamo.

When the Mexican soldiers, like vultures, gathered round to destroy the dead, Castrillo turned his back that he might not see. By and by loud jeers bursting upon his ears caused him to turn his head, for their coarseness and hellish glee riveted his attention. What mangled body was it that caused them such fiendish delight? Looking closely Castrillo recognized the powder-begrimed corpse of Crockett. Quickly surging over his soul came the feeling that

but for this man's interference Joséfa might now be his. At first the thought infuriated him, making him glad to think this was his fate, but as the lifeless clay was dragged nearer and he saw the gash in the forehead where his own sabre had struck, and remembering how David had fought, Castrillo exclaimed :

"Crockett was too brave to be burned like a dog, but never mind ; throw him in."

His last words pleased the soldiers, whose favor he was beginning already to court.

Although it was not late in the afternoon, the sun withdrew from the horror of such a scene, and the heavens, veiling themselves in misty clouds, seemed silently weeping over man's inhumanity. When the pyre was ignited the moaning of the wind sounded a requiem for the dead. The fire, the cruel, hungry fire, like the Mexicans, knew no mercy. Its tongues went out and licked up the blood of the heroes of the Alamo. The wood crackled, and as the pure snow drops falling down a chimney sputter, so the blood of those Texan martyrs sputtered in the flame. The flames licked their faces with fiery breath, singeing their hair ; the corpses began to turn ash and crumble, like the trunks of burnt-out trees. At times the smoke covered them with a pall, but here and there sightless eyes peeped grimly out ; an arm poked forth as if it fain would strike ; a leg dangled limp that would have trampled on such inhumanity, such outrage—but only for a moment, for the fire leaping higher consumed all before it. The fumes from the pyre were horrible in the extreme, mingling as they

did the smell of burnt wood, charred human flesh, and the buckskin suits of the defenders of the Alamo. The wind caught it up and wafted it all over San Antonio, a blood-curdling, unsavory smell to every nostril save Santa Anna's. To him it seemed as incense.

Sheets of flame now enveloped the pyre and blazed upward in a smoking, lurid glow, and then sunk slowly as the corpses beneath burnt out—the fuel grew less. Glimmering sparks fell like hail upon the ground around as if Nemesis were striving to catch in her wrath and wipe out of existence those who participated in this atrocity. A long, slim tongue of flame, serpent-shaped, like the emblem of Mexico, shot in the air, writhed for a second only, and then fell back, vanquished in the dying embers.

The tumult of the orgy was more than Castrillo could stand, and long since he had withdrawn from the scene, but the memory of it went with him, and try as he would he could not shut it out from his vision. He longed in vain for the river of forgetfulness to wash the heat from his brow. He wondered, though he had not seen his face, if the man who had so recklessly ridden up and seized Joséfa were Carlos Daubigny, his rival whom she loved. The thought came to him that perchance their bodies now lay together in the funeral pyre, while their souls, like birds set free, having loved on earth, might seek each other to mate in Elysian fields. The thought was unbearable and Castrillo, distracted with jealousy, threw himself on the ground, clutch-

ing the sod in his suffering, while agonizing groans rent the air.

Not half a mile from him sat Joséfa, with her head bowed in her hands. Shuddering and sick at heart she sought to shut out the terrible reality; but Father Clement watched the funeral pyre. The French in his nature was aroused; mob-like, his feelings effervesced with vehemence; he was wild with excitement and as rabidly indignant as was ever Peter the Hermit at the sacrilege to the sepulchre. In his frenzy he forgot all languages save his native tongue, which proved fortunate for his safety, as the Spanish-speaking people whom he denounced would hardly have borne his vituperations.

"Heap on the fire!" he shouted; "kindle with your own hands the beacon light to inspire others with their fortitude and bravery, for the phoenix of Liberty will rise out of their ashes!

"Brave Texans," he continued, "like Elijah of old they ascend to heaven in a chariot like unto fire, and the time will come when *'the blood-stained stones of the Alamo will speak that their immolation be not forgotten; for Thermopylae had her messengers of defeat—the Alamo has none.'*"*

The Priest having delivered his eulogy, jerked Joséfa's arm, bidding her arise, for San Antonio had now become a bedlam. The Mexican army was celebrating its victory with a carousal that made the hours hideous and the city unsafe for women; so Father Clement and his godchild hurried away.

A slight shower meanwhile had begun to fall, as if pitying Heaven sought to quench the spirit of

barbaric cruelty. When the clouds lifted, a rainbow like an arch of triumph spanned the sky above the Alamo. In it were woven beams of hope like primeval prophecy and promise that never again would the power of destruction hold sway o'er the land. Brighter and brighter it grew. Filmy threads of gold seemed holding together myriads of emerald, amethyst, beryl, topaz, sapphire and ruby into a tiara fit to crown the Goddess of Liberty. Ere its radiant glimmer faded into the twilight one lonely little star peeped out timidly and feebly flickered in the gloom. Soon the dark blue curtain of night was spangled with other constellations, but none shown with a brighter, purer light more beautiful than the lone star twinkling above the battered, blood-stained walls of the Alamo.

These quotations marked with a star () in this chapter are from the inscriptions on the old monument erected at Austin of stones from the Alamo, to the memory of Travis, Bowie, Bonham, and Crockett.

CHAPTER XIV

THE WEIGHT OF A FEATHER

The long and fearful anxiety of the trying days in the fort had told on Joséfa. The fate of the Alamo garrison had made her tremble for her lover's safety in a land invaded by Santa Anna, for where Daubigny was she knew not. The possibility of his seeking her in San Antonio filled her with dread, and yet in leaving Bexar she feared they might never meet again, for no clue had been left as to their movements. The relinquishment of this hope completely overwhelmed her. Heartbroken she felt, and little caring whether life or death awaited them, the señorita followed the Jesuit.

Fearing to take the road, lest they cross Mexican soldiers, the Priest hugged the river bank, trusting the protecting friendliness of advancing night might shelter them with its darkness, but the undergrowth of vines and bushes was so dense, walking was no easy task, yet on they trudged, hoping to leave the city some distance behind before day revealed their cover. When the moon stealing into the sky brightened their way, they were enabled to proceed with more ease.

Father Clement, realizing the girl's strength was well-nigh exhausted, resolved that just as soon as a

clearing was reached they must tarry for rest, for he deemed the danger greater from insects and snakes in the thicket than elsewhere the probability of human foes. When, however, they finally emerged into an open space, two disagreeable surprises awaited them. The land, though free from underbrush, was covered with cactus, while seated on a broken tree, not twenty feet away, was a man occupied in removing thorns from his feet. Roughly clad, with marks of pain on his brow, his presence was not a pleasing sight. That he did not wear a Mexican uniform, though, was at least comforting to the Jesuit. Approaching, the Priest addressed him, forgetful he was still using a language foreign to the vernacular of the country, until in French equalling his own in fluency the stranger replied:

"Why, Père Clement, I am Moses Rose."

Joséfa, seeing him better and hearing his name, instantly recognized him as the man who had admitted Niña, and, later on, jumped from the walls of the Alamo. Fearing to travel in the day, Rose had lain hidden in the shelter of the river's foliage. His meanderings the night before had not taken him far, for the norther sweeping over Bexar had made the sky moonless and his limbs numb with cold. Learning from the Priest the particulars of the battle, the man shivered. "It is even worse than I dreaded," he said, "though I knew the end had come by the cessation of cannonading." He then added, as if explaining his flight: "I had my fill of the sufferings of war when we retreated from Moscow; that was why I came to Louisiana. Had I stayed,

like the others, I would have perished. As it is I go forth to bear to the world the tidings of that siege and of Travis's speech; and when the Texans hear all, their war cry will be, 'Remember the Alamo!'

Whereupon the Priest snatched off his old hat, as he had waved his cockade in days gone by, exclaiming with the modulation of a suppressed shout, "Ours was '*Liberté! Egalité! Fraternité!*' " Then, kneeling down, Father Clement busied himself pulling out the long thorns with which Rose's feet and legs were filled.

"*Mon Dieu!* how the cactus thorns hurt!" winced Rose, adding: "This country ain't fit for anything but hell, so it will suit Santa Anna first rate. *Tiens!* Who wants to live here, where every bush has got a thorn on it and even the sand is all mixed up with ants, and actually the toads have got horns. *Morbleu!* that Mexican devil can have Texas and welcome too, for all Moses Rose cares."

The chill following the wake of the norther had been greatly moderated by a warm breeze springing up from the south. When daybreak came, though, it had not dissipated the great mist that lay along the river bank and beyond it, and in the gray of the morning the trio plodded on. The days following brought only the hardships that are common to travelers unprepared for a journey. As neither the Priest nor Rose had a gun, though often pheasant and plover whirled close by them, it was only to whet their appetites for the herbs, roots, and mushrooms that were all they had to satisfy hunger, so

great was their joy when a cabin appeared in view. Upon reaching it the house was found deserted, its inhabitants having fled, leaving their provisions behind them in their haste to quit a land threatened by Santa Anna's army. There the travelers tarried, while Joséfa's skill provided a repast equalling a feast, for bread was baked, meat fried and coffee boiled.

Being refreshed greatly by this meal and having provided themselves with such food as could be conveniently carried, the journey was again resumed. The trail followed, indistinct at first, soon became more clearly defined as it led into a canebrake, the passage through which was barely wide enough to allow the travelers to proceed in single file. The tops of the stalks oftentimes completely overlapped their path, making a tunnel opening, picturesque, like a covert-way leading to a guarded bower. When Father Clement, Joséfa and Rose issued from this canebrake it was to find themselves facing an Indian village. On a small dry space these savages had their camp. Near the tent doors, in sight of their working mothers, hung the papooses in their comfortable cradles, while on the sward tumbled and played the larger children. Close by several ponies were quietly grazing, while ten or twelve braves lounged under two small trees, the only shade in the opening. Seeing the intruders, instantly they sprang to their feet, looking at them in a most menacing way. When they saw how small was their number they muttered words in their own language meaning "Spies! Spies!" and raising their tomahawks threat-

eningly, compelled them to surrender, for these Indians belonged to the Campeachy nation, that was hostile and treacherous to the Americans, joining with the Mexicans in their atrocities. Believing by their soiled appearance that they were fugitive Texans, they treated them accordingly. All pleadings from the Priest proved futile, and forthwith the Campeachys proceeded to bind them with thongs. Joséfa and Rose were tied first and securely made fast to the trees. When, however, the savages approached Father Clement to treat him likewise, immediately he fell on his knees, and opening his coat produced a small crucifix that fairly dazzled the sight of the bewildered redskins. Seeing it was producing an effect, the Jesuit pointed heavenward; then, rising to his feet, he removed a cross worn about his neck and handed it to the buck nearest him, offering the others the crucifix, which none of them would touch, though they scanned it with curious eyes.

His gestures convinced the Indians that he was appealing to the Great Spirit, for back to his knees the Priest had sunk, and with crucifix held high above his head was praying with a fervency that awed them, causing them to slink away to confer together. When finally he arose from his supplications a young buck approached and led him near the fire, where a squaw was preparing some venison. The Jesuit, by signs toward Joséfa and Rose, was not slow in making the Indians understand that he would not touch the meat until his companions were first fed, a sentiment that produced laconic grunts of

disgust from his captors. The young braves, though glaring viciously at Rose, cast such admiring glances upon Joséfa that Father Clement was so disquieted he could not relish his food, albeit he forced it down. When the crescent moon shone like a scimitar in the heavens the Indians settled themselves to rest, a young buck watching close beside Father Clement.

All the Priest's thoughts were for Joséfa, whose low weeping soon gave way to exhaustion as she slept the sleep of the weary. Rose was between the Jesuit and the señorita, but no word of comfort dared the men whisper to each other, and ere long the old Frenchman heard a snore from his compatriot. The night wore on, still Father Clement never closed his eyes. Possessing his soul with patience, he tried to think, to devise some plan of escape. Noting the intentness with which his guard was watching him, the idea suddenly flashed across the Jesuit's mind that Mesmerism might possibly open a way, for when a young man in Paris, Father Clement had seen Mesmer himself and remembered well his methods.

Taking from his breast his crucifix, the Priest by twirling it constantly soon riveted the redskin's scrutiny; next he began moving it in mystic circles, noting, meanwhile, with delight the effect the shining object was producing. Great drops of perspiration began to appear on the Campeachy's brow, his breath became slower and slower, as the stage of drowsiness progressed. The Indian's eyes finally closed, his breathing became regular, slow and somewhat snoring, for he had fallen into a deep hypnotic sleep.

Father Clement then very cautiously raised himself on his elbow, and being satisfied that all was well, crept along until he reached Rose, whom he quickly loosened and awoke. Moving on to Joséfa, after cutting her thongs, with a gentle shake he sought to arouse her. The startled señorita, on opening her eyes failed to recognize the figure bending over her. Mistaking Father Clement for a savage, she uttered a piercing shriek that broke the sleep of every warrior—all save the young buck. Leaping to their feet, the Campeachys thought at first it was a signal, until they realized their captives were seeking to escape.

The Priest now felt that he had sealed their doom. Finding their prisoners still helpless and in their power, the savages surrounded them, yelping like coyotes in their glee. This continued until the prostrate form of Father Clement's guard diverted their attention. Approaching, they turned him over to ascertain whether he were alive. Hearing his loud breathing, they shook him and gave him several kicks, but without arousing him; then they withdrew, firmly convinced that the Priest had cast a spell upon him.

Soon the soft pink lights against the dawning gray heralded sunrise, and the squaws bestirred themselves, busy getting breakfast, while still the buck slept on—until the sun, like a disc, shone high in the heavens. A large band of warriors in the meantime returned to the village. Their appearance was formidable in the extreme, for their ugly faces were smeared yellow about the eyes with splotches of

indigo on either cheek. A pow-wow immediately began. The men were sub-divided into groups. Those who participated in the hunt, but were too young to be on the war-path, cast covetous eyes on their seniors, whose stern faces were seamed with scars bespeaking their prowess. Not far from the warriors sat the old men of the tribe, many of whom were toothless and wrinkled and gray, but whose daring in days past had established their ascendancy. The crones came out of their wigwams, and huddling respectfully near, began to chant in a low and monotonous key of the former glories of the Campeachy nation. As they recalled the lost power of the tribe, their gray locks were tossed in the air, while with a common howl they sought to accentuate some special cadence.

Father Clement knew now or never was the time to work upon their superstition. Pointing to the buck who still lay under his hypnotic spell, by signs he challenged the Indians to awaken him—signifying it was in his power to do so. Their medicine-men, crowned with leaves and wearing necklaces of shells, went through weird ceremonies over him, such as dancing and shaking of rattles, at which the Priest laughed derisively as the young Indian still lay like one in a trance, a stupor. Motioning them to stop their futile attempts, the Jesuit leaned over the sleeper, and slowly passing his hands over the buck's eyes, in a loud voice commanded him to arise. His hypnotic sleep broken, instantly the Indian obeyed by springing to his feet. The effect was awesome. The Campeachys regarded it as a miracle, and fear

seized upon them, but only temporarily, for their war blood was up, their savagery was aroused, craving refreshment, demanding indulgence. Their plans soon materialized—they would adopt Father Clement into their tribe as a medicine-man, but burn the other two, for, though many of the braves would have liked to have had Joséfa, they feared in some manner occult, mysterious, the Priest would spirit her away. Two stakes were accordingly driven in the ground, to which Joséfa and Rose were trussed. Father Clement now waved his crucifix wildly, imploring the help of heaven, but the Campeachys were sullen, dogged, resolute. They had seen before this the incantations of medicine-men.

The squaws and children made haste to the cane-brake, and returning with arms heavy laden with sticks and dry fuel, began placing it around the stakes.

The señorita bore the rough treatment to which she was subjected in a manner that elicited the Campeachys' admiration. The frightful scenes of the Alamo, so recently experienced, had benumbed her feelings. Love and grief for Daubigny had preyed on her mind until she seemed stupefied—and the Indian vein inherited from her mother made her stoical.

Moses Rose, being of coarser calibre, wept aloud at his prospective torture. His fear greatly delighting the young braves, made them leap in air, whirling their tomahawks as if to brain him, and narrowly grazing his head, while mocking laughter at their fiendish sport burst from their lips. Grim old hags

also tortured Rose, twisting their wrinkled faces into bunches of knots in token of the pain the fire would make him suffer. Their barbaric love of agony made them determined to burn the man first, hoping his death might melt the courage of the girl. The grief of Father Clement amused them greatly and they compelled him to join the procession of braves in the death-dance. Many times the savages circled around the stakes with a slow, measured tread, then their movements became quicker, imitating as they did the flight of vultures and the rush of wolves. The squaws bringing the fire, approached with cries wild and terrible; the warriors paused to see them light the kindling. At that moment a loud neigh sounded on the air, to which the Campeachys' ponies whinnied in reply, just as the canes parted and another band of warriors rode into view. The death-song ceased—the newcomers were not Campeachys, but their liegelords, the Comanches. A loud shout of thanksgiving burst from the lips of the Priest when he recognized the foremost rider as Big Terrapin. Seizing his bridle, the Jesuit led him to where Joséfa stood at the stake. All too well the Chief knew the seriousness of her position.

Removing the headgear containing the ostrich feather she had given him, he shook it proudly in the air, uttering words most ferocious in sound. Then placing his war-bonnet on the señorita's head, he declared any insult offered to her would be even as to himself.

"Hearken," he said, using a language comprehensible to his hearers, "to the words of one who

is a great chief and has sat in many war-councils. Many moons have come and gone since the Comanches sought to chastise their brothers, the Campeachys, but Big Terrapin will tie knots in his belt of wampum and bid his tribe dig up the war-hatchet if his friends of the pale faces, the old man, the young maiden, and their companion are not treated kindly. The nation of the Comanches is powerful, the sky is the roof of their wigwam, the earth is their mother, the Great Spirit their Father. From Him we learn to battle and have the power of conquering our enemies like game falls before the hunter in the moon of leaves. Free these captives and Big Terrapin will smoke again the peace-pipe with the tribe of the Campeachys."

A dignity almost noble accompanied these words, but his physical rather than moral influence had weight with his listeners. Silently and sullenly the dastardly redskins hastened to obey him, for well they knew, as Big Terrapin stood before them like a colossal statue in bronze, that he made no boast that he was not able to execute.

"Big Terrapin will remember this," he said, "when the sun rises on other councils and he mingles his voice with the words of wise men." Then lifting Joséfa up in front of him, the Chief galloped out of the village, while the two Frenchmen, on mounts supplied by the Comanches, followed. The nimble ponies of the Indians soon bore them out of harm's way. With the coming of daylight Rose, quitting his horse and the party, struck across the country toward the east, while the others rode on silently. The arm of Big Terrapin, a huge mass of iron

muscles, held Joséfa firmly though tenderly as his horse broke into a gallop. His treatment of the señorita was gentle and unobtrusive, astonishing in a savage. Ere long the Mission of Espiritu Santo loomed in the distance and the village of Goliad appeared in view. Before reaching there the Comanches halted. Pointing toward Goliad, Big Terrapin said: "Squaw love pale face!" And placing her gently on the ground, a look of pride overspread his countenance while delight danced in his snakey eyes as he said:

"Me big Injun, me kill him—so—!" And the Chief, leaping back on his pony, flashed the Toledan blade, that Father Clement had given him, through the air with a sweep that carried horror to Joséfa's heart as she noticed for the first time on Big Terrapin's hand Carlos Daubigney's signet ring. The girl uttered a cry of anguish, then darkness flooded her bewildered brain, for desolate and widowed felt her heart, making her long to die, since life seemed filled with naught but misery.

CHAPTER XV

CONCERNING DAUBIGNEY

Charles Dabney took as a favorable omen his being allowed to pass the Mexicans' sentries without challenge, for the Virginian, like men whose lives have been moulded by fate rather than their own fancy, had become in a way superstitious, a predestinarian, a fatalist. Through faith in the cause of liberty he now hoped the Alamo would be saved, that it would be a victory for Texas, but he could not understand how that would be possible except by temporal relief. With a soldier's resignation he had accepted the risk of bearing Travis's appeal for succor. It was an effort made sacred by love of country and her who was already his heart's bride—and the Virginian was not the man to shirk an obligation, a duty, which in this instance was also a privilege.

The weather was in harmony with conditions; the air was cool, biting, but leaving San Antonio it was as if riding out of the norther's teeth. The leaden, sullen sky disappeared and overhead spread a cerulean canopy, with laces of thin white clouds. The atmosphere became pure and bland with that transparency characteristic of Texas climate. The prairie unrolled itself like a giant scroll, immense,

measureless, infinite. Primeval stillness brooded over its vastness, the league on league that was Dabney's race-track, with the lives in the Alamo, the life of Joséfa, at stake. The man rode as he had never ridden before. If he had followed his desire he would have gone as if astride the lightning, but good judgment prompted his not spending his horse's strength in the outset. He was well mounted, his animal being a dark gray, of good metal, willing spirit and finely limbed. The prairie was covered with a short herbage, coarse and wiry, known as buffalo grass. At this season it was too dry for good grazing, but occasionally Dabney noted worn footpaths showing where bison had passed. As the ground sloped southward, the turf became more spongy, groves of mesquite resembling peach orchards broke the monotony of dead level, while scrub jacks and post-oaks rose like lone sentinels guarding the plain.

Dabney's horse went on in a swinging gallop, and the rider's heart, filled with his mission, leaped for joy at the distance he had already covered. Hope rose high, buoyant, exultant, as he began to feel sanguine of success. He knew that all Americans in Texas would flock to the aid of the Alamo when they learned of the dangers besetting the brave garrison. Dabney could see in his mind's eye Houston leading a relief force. The Virginian knew the material that would comprise that division, those who would answer to Travis's call; men rough but trustworthy, strong but sympathetic, loyally loving but mercilessly hating—before such a force

Dabney felt Santa Anna's horde would be as tin soldiers, with no patriotism to give battle, no heart to fight. And this was not the only picture that rose to Dabney's mind. Beyond the war clouds his fancy descried the shimmer of a horizon bounded by a hearthstone where he and Joséfa would sit together, and while she thrummed her guitar he would read to her from Texas history of the ride of one Charles Dabney who, like Paul Revere, carried the alarm and at the eleventh hour brought deliverance to the Alamo. He imagined the look on Joséfa's face, the sparkle in her eye when he would interpolate the written record with the statement that the daring ride was due to love for a woman, a sweetheart who was within the fort. This reflection so cheered his spirits with its fascination and charm that unconsciously the man began to whistle a snatch from a Spanish love-song that the señorita had taught him. The sun dipping westward lit up the sky, pink, purple, crimson. Dabney noted the changes as variegated as autumn tints, as paints on a palette or the colors of a chameleon. His thoughts were on love, the unchanging love that comes but once in a lifetime, that knows no confines, but is as broad as the prairie, as limitless as the sky. The sun again riveting his attention, insensibly his tune changed from the wild Spanish strain, teeming with passion, to that English lay of steadfastness, of constancy:

"The heart that once truly loves never forgets,
But as truly loves on to the close,
As the sunflower turns on her god when he sets,
The same look that she turned when he rose."

Suddenly he felt his horse give under him. Quick as a thought he braced himself in his stirrups and reined up his steed; then he urged on the gray, but to no avail; the horse stumbled again nearly to his nose.

"Oh, hell!" muttered Dabney, as instantly he jumped to the ground. Dropping to his knee he reached up with his hand, stroking the gray's shoulder, trying to inspire confidence, for the poor animal's pain kept him moving in a restive manner. His hobbling revealed that he had gone lame in the left fore foot; in fact, he held it up, limping like a lame dog. Dabney threw the bridle over his horse's head, slipping his left arm through it, gathering it tightly, and so held it while he assumed a blacksmith's position. With his back to the horse's head he grabbed the lame leg near the fetlock, bringing the hoof up between his legs, holding it with his knees clamped like a vise. Examination showed that the injury was not to the hoof, but that the pastern joint had received a severe wrench. Looking down at the ground the Virginian perceived that it was honeycombed, that it was a prairie-dog village. The horse's hoof had gone into one of their subterranean passageways. Dabney was desperate. He caught the bridle and began leading the gray. Faint yelps as from young puppies broke the silence of the evening, the sound infuriating the Virginian beyond expression as he spied several frightened prairie-dogs whisking into their holes. The horse continued to limp painfully; there seemed little chance that he would be of any further use—

yet the message had to be carried, Travis's appeal must speed on. Dabney's hope of saving the garrison was implacable, steadfast, not to be relinquished; he prayed as he had never prayed before, and in the gloaming of the sunset the prairie stretched before him, flat, immense, infinite, seemingly a mockery. Dabney began to wonder if the fate of the Alamo were inevitable, inexorable, destined, and if his horse's lameness were one of those accidents trifling in itself, yet on which the mysterious ways of Providence seem to pivot great issues. This trend of thought did not bring with it resignation. The evanescence of his hopes, the figment of his dread, the grinding, nerve-racking consciousness of what failure on his part would mean to others was a contingency that well-nigh crazed him, for on the segment of his duty performed rested the fate of the whole Alamo. He could not convince himself that it was intended for evil to prevail, for the right to be overthrown. The outlook was black, terrible, awful, but despair bred a hope illegitimate of reason, and Dabney did not abandon his purpose of carrying Travis's appeal—he would take it if he had to walk every foot of the way; when his strength gave out he would crawl; he would die before he would surrender to circumstances. Rebellion stirred within him, grappled with resignation in mortal combat and came out victor, so that Dabney found himself almost running. The poor gray's limping retarded his progress, and convinced that the horse would be of no further service to him, he uncinched his saddle,

threw it away, turned the animal loose, and sped on like a spectre pursued by destiny.

At times like this, when the Virginian's efforts seemed a disappointment, a failure, current suggestions set in vibration the secret, the sorrow of his life. It was like the ringing of the bells of buried Is. It was as if a curtain hiding an old painting had suddenly been drawn aside, revealing a picture of agony that one would prefer not to see. But memory's light was not to be extinguished; it shone terribly vivid, searing the Virginian's soul with the brand of Cain. This was his secret, his sorrow, of which no one in Texas knew save Father Clement, to whom he had confided it, and the Priest with pitying charity and his knowledge of the human heart had held him blameless.

Silent, alert, keen, ready for anything, Dabney now pressed on, his eyes wide open as if to catch some ray of help, some glimmer of relief. In the distance, like a speck on the horizon, he noted a black cloud that momentarily grew larger and larger. His experiences on the plains made him quick to recognize it as a herd of buffalo coming rapidly in his direction. On they came with tails in air like spears, their huge bodies wallowing into one big mass of brown, the earth clattering like a sounding-board under their hoofs. The fear that in their stampede they might run over him never once occurred to Dabney's mind. In their mad rush they swerved eastward, clumsily galloping with animal instinct far from the prairie-dog village. The cause of their excitement was explained when

a band of Indians hove in sight. The savages, having singled out their game, were closing in rapid circles around a big bull that had become separated from the affrighted herd. His bulky frame was already porcupined with arrows and a powerful brave was not long in finishing the conquest. With a bellow that echoed afar, the buffalo gave up the battle.

The Virginian involuntarily had become interested in the spectacle, and the Indians, ever watchful, had already spied him. To Dabney's surprise they approached without shooting a single arrow. The big brave that had killed the buffalo seemed their leader. Not a flutter of fear did Joséfa's lover feel as he confronted them, though his patriotism rebelled at the probability of his life being uselessly sacrificed when Texas stood in such need of defenders, of soldiers. There was a possibility, slim as a spider's web, that from these Indians he might obtain a horse, and this thought caused his heart to thrill. If this proved not true, if he could not carry Travis's appeal and save Joséfa, then the sooner death came the more ready he would welcome it. His stoicism was supreme as he waved to the redskins and proffered his powder horn and gun to their Chief. Dabney's calmness, together with his recognition of their power, seemed to please the savages, who appreciated he was not a coward. The Chief motioned him to keep his belongings, saying in his own tongue:

"My white brother is not a squaw."

Then tapping his breast that covered lungs like a smithy's bellows, he imparted the information that he was a "Big Chief."

In a patois, part Spanish and half English, Dabney asked him if his nation were at war with the Americans, for he knew the Mexicans were trying to stir up the Indians to hostility. The redskin shook his head, grunted a negative and sneeringly added:

"Me no Campeachy—me Comanche; big Injun, pale face friend." And pointing to the plume that floated from his bonnet of eagle feathers, Big Terrapin continued: "Little squaw give it me."

When Dabney understood that this reference was to Joséfa, he at once told of her danger, of the Mexicans besieging the fort and of his journeying in pursuit of aid, then of the accident to his horse.

The Chief listened attentively, imperturbably. He already knew of Santa Anna's invasion and for that reason was not going back to Bexar, but was on the way to the land of their vassals, the Campeachys. Anticipating the request the Virginian would make of him, Big Terrapin in a manner courtly and grave, though it loses much of its beauty by being interpreted in English, said:

"The Comanches owning all the wild horses on the plain, it is the pleasure of their Chief to supply the lost messenger with a better pony, for the pale face needs four legs to cross the country of the Comanches, while his red brother with only two can equal the deer as a runner, and only rides when wishing to go with the speed of the west wind."

But the Indian would not hear of Dabney's leaving them until he had first partaken of the buffalo feast that was being prepared. The meat was being jerked on two huge spits in a way that would have tickled the palate of a gourmand. Dabney had never felt less like eating; however, being wise in the ways of the plain, he feared to offend Big Terrapin if he declined his hospitality.

The Comanches had spread around their camp-fire their lariats of horse hair, aiming to form a corral to keep off insects and reptiles. The ruddy glow of the blazing fire silhouetted the Chief like a statue in bronze, as he sat on a wolf's skin. His war bonnet was pushed back from his high forehead, the white ostrich plume Joséfa had given him fell in marked contrast to the coarse black locks about his neck. As usual he wore his leather shirt bedecked with fringe, dyed vermillion. Dabney's attitude presented a vast contrast. He was stretched on the other side of the fire, his eyes shielded by his hat, his hands clasped under his head, the picture of utter weariness.

The wind wafting a whiff from the broiling meat caused Big Terrapin to mumble something about being hungry, but so occupied was Dabney with thoughts of the Alamo and Joséfa that he did not hear the Chief, and neither did he hear a curious, clicking rattle that sounded alarmingly near. The Indian's ear, though, caught the warning, and quick as a flash he drew the rapier the Priest had given him, severing the rattler's head just as the snake, having hissed, sprang at the Virginian. While his

veins swelled and his nostrils distended, with that superstitious foreboding to which the savage is prone, Big Terrapin, using the point of the sword, straightened out the wriggling body so that Dabney might view its length—the snake counted twenty-one rattles beside the button.

The Indian's eyes now reflected a new interest; like the primitive man his language was simple but with the wisdom of ages in his words:

"Ugh!" grunted he, shaking his head, "Death lurks in the way."

Dabney was then urged to change his course, for the hiss of a serpent was explained as a warning, and that unless it was heeded an awful death would overtake him.

The Virginian, beholding the rattler lying dead, and realizing that but for the Indian's intervention the venom would now be poisoning his blood, felt a shudder pass over his frame, and he began wondering how to repay such a service. Removing from his hand his signet ring, Dabney pressed it to his lips as one kissing a Bible when taking an oath; then handing it to the Chief begged him to accept it, explaining it was the greatest gift he could bestow upon any one. Closely scrutinizing the ring, the Indian pointed to the crest, asking Dabney what it meant. The Virginian answered simply that it was his totem, for a feeling of sadness so pervaded him that he cared not to talk. He was thinking of the Daubigny motto: "*He conquers that overcomes himself.*"

Notwithstanding Big Terrapin's counsel, as soon as the Virginian had partaken of food he begged to set forth on his journey. The land was rougher, more pebbly, with here and there clumps of chaparral. The moon sailed on a sea of blue, with white-capped cloudlets, and with no guide save the stars and his senses, Dabney pressed forward. The rhythm of his steed seemed to double and treble itself in the sougling of the night wind. The Indian's horse carried him in a swift canter, and the Virginian, patting the coarse, rough mane, whispered:

"Thank God, we may yet do it—we *must do it!*"

And the strong little pony, reeking with foam and sweat, snorted as if in affirmation, as on he went, fleet as an antelope, taking the ground with a long, sweeping, steady lope, Dabney's body lying low and close to the animal's neck, his eyes shining with eagerness.

Only Divine penetration could have told all that was passing in his mind—Joséfa might yet be rescued, might yet be his!

And thus was Travis's death-cry brought to Sam Houston by a rider whose horse dropped dead from exhaustion as he entered the little village of Washington on the Brazos.

* * * * *

The siege had already ended.

The Alamo had fallen—but Charles Dabney knew it not; he simply knew he had performed the duty intrusted to him, that he had done his best, and with the consciousness a great peace stole into his tired heart.

CHAPTER XVI

MEXICAN VERACITY

Dabney, having delivered Travis's appeal, immediately set forth to return to San Antonio, following a different route. All the country through which he passed showed the terrible dread the Texans felt at Santa Anna's invasion. Settlers were leaving their homes, taking their wives and little ones to places of safety.

When the Colorado River was reached a heart-rending sight met the Virginian's eyes. It was a woman, with several children, seated in a wagon, gazing at the water in which her husband had just perished. Before trusting to drive his family across, this man had waded into the stream to test its depth; an alligator had seized him, dragging him forever from view. Other refugees happening along, the bereaved ones joined their company and so continued their journey. Some of the fugitives told Dabney the news of the Alamo. Though a dire sense of apprehension seized his soul, their words failed to carry conviction—it was too terrible to believe, too awful to be true.

"How do you know the fort has already fallen?" the Virginian asked, while he held his breath, hoping the proof would be a supposition. He

looked jaded, worn out, ill; black lines about his eyes made them appear sunken, almost like sockets in a skeleton.

"Know!" disdainfully vociferated a frontiersman, "by God, I have jist parted with Deaf Smith, him whar met that poor woman that seed it all with her own eyes and was ther only one left ter tell ther tale. Smith seed her safe ter Gonzales, whar thar's plenty of wailing, fer nearly every last man from thar whar volunteer'd left a widow behind him."

"A woman, you say, was saved?"

"Yes, ther wife of one of ther officers whar was killed; disremember his name, but her an' her little gal was ther only ones whar escaped. Every other soul was wiped clean out an' that devil Santy Anny jist spared her ter tell ther Texans so. I be dern if yer catch me here longer, in a land whar Satan is let loose. I'm gwine ter get shet o' him 'fore he gits a chance ter roast me!"

The frontiersman then, as if there were not a moment to lose, struck his horse and was off, leaving Dabney fully convinced that the description he had heard fitted none other than Mother Dickinson.

The Alamo had fallen!

Joséfa, then, was dead; dead; dead!

She who had been so bright, so beauteous, so lovable, so harmless, plucked like a prairie flower by the relentless hand of war. The Virginian's love for her was part of his being, pure, marvelous, divine—a gift from Heaven, the breath of the LOVE that vitalizes the human heart with immortality. The loss of Joséfa seemed the severing of his soul;

the good, the noble, the best that was in him belonged to her, and with her it ended. The shock had paralyzed it, killed it, stamped it out forever, and in its stead loomed vengeance, hatred—sombre, ineffaceable, portentous. There was no thought of restraint, no desire to curb his rancor—fierce, bitter, vindictive. Dead—dead—dead! Every footfall of Dabney's horse seemed to repeat it, to emphasize it. The plain reverberated it in a way as hollow, as comfortless, as grating as if it were a human voice trying to give utterance to sympathy, to solace the stricken when the wine-press must be trodden alone. The clatter of his horse's hoofs became slower, more like a funeral dirge, breathing—grief, misery, agony, revenge! Dabney's brain ceased to think—there was a terrible dry sob in his heart, but no tears came to his relief. Anguish had frozen them, had petrified all feeling, but sorrow does not kill; it imposes a worse sentence—life. The inhumanity of ambition, the greed, the selfishness, the cruelty of Santa Anna recoiled upon Dabney with terrible force, and yet the Virginian's fury was that of impotence; it was the rage of helplessness before a despot who was rampant, paramount.

But in Joséfa's lover's breast a hope leaped and stood firm; a resolution formed itself; it was the spirit of Travis incarnate that voiced the sentiment, "Kill them as they kill our companions; kill them as they kill us, then what matter that our lives be lost—" Dabney wheeled his horse and turned toward Goliad, determined to cast his lot with

Fannin's command, guessing that would likely be the next the Mexicans would attack.

He was right.

When Goliad was reached, the Virginian found that he was just in time to join the Americans who, acting from orders from Sam Houston, were preparing to quit the presidio, the old Mission of Espiritu Santo, which Fannin had rechristened Fort Defiance, for the certainty that General Ramon Urrea was approaching made them anxious to leave, lest their fate be similar to the garrison of the Alamo. They therefore began a march toward Victoria on the Guadalupe.

Through a dense fog the wagon-train crossed the San Antonio River, experiencing much trouble in getting ordnance over, due not only to the steep banks but to the rapid current of the stream. This accomplished, it was found necessary to either rest the oxen or abandon the artillery. The sky being clouded, when a low rumble as of distant thunder sounded on the air the Texans did not recognize it as the thud of horses' hoofs and the dull, even tramp of armed men, until suddenly the searchlight of a noon-day sun glittered on the gay uniforms of the approaching Mexican soldiery.

Urrea's men instantly halted, uncertain, suspicious. They, too, were surprised at this encounter. They had thought to catch the Texans in the fort like a death-trap. Their pause gave Fannin time to form his men into a hollow square. It was the best he could do, for the Texans were on an open plain, rather lower than the ground occupied

by the enemy. The confronting forces pictured a vast contrast. Fannin's men were volunteers from Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia, Tennessee and Kentucky—imbued with the same courage that enabled their sires to free the land from Indian and British foe. The blood in their veins and the love of liberty inspired them with courage, though idea of resistance was a chimera, for a child could have foretold the result. The clanking of metal horse trappings, the rattle of Mexican cavalry accoutrements, the disparity in numbers that no valor could resist—such was the army of Urrea. Go to history for the details of that battle, for the account of how the little handful of Texans, five hundred in all, were pitted against seven hundred cavalry and a thousand of infantry; but General Urrea had little ammunition with him and his artillery was a day's march behind.

"Let us win or die in the attempt," called Fannin, "for might doesn't make right and force doesn't always prevail!"

At his words a cheer went up from his soldiers, for the ardor of youth rendered them hopeful, which has proven of vital force in many a conflict. For four hours they bravely withstood the Mexicans—these Texan volunteers, scarce out of their teens, brawny youths and stalwart striplings, whom sympathy had enlisted under the banner of the Lone Star. Like Titans they held the enemy at bay until their cannon, from lack of water, became too hot for use. Their position then grew desperate; the Mexicans were too strong for them, yet still these

patriots fought, though the revel of death had begun, and when darkness fell on the scene, closing the day's hostilities, the army of Urrea had not won a victory, for the Texans remained unbeaten.

All of Fannin's teams having stampeded while the battle raged, there was no possible way for his men to retreat during the night, for many were wounded and the unhurt would not desert them. The Texan camp now presented a heartrending scene. There was no water to satisfy the thirst of the wounded or to moisten the parched lips of the dying, whose groans were agonizing to hear. The morrow brought artillery and ammunition supplies to the Mexicans, but no help to the little band.

Colonel Fannin, who had been severely wounded, rallied his men and left it to them to decide whether they would surrender. Some violently opposed it, but the majority thought it useless to hold out longer. They were not whipped, but overpowered; supreme courage could not cope with such overwhelming force. So the Texans raised a white flag and Fannin went forth to treat with Urrea, calling out:

"Boys, if I can't get an honorable surrender I'll come back and we'll all die together."

After consultation, Ramon Urrea agreed in a stipulation written in both Spanish and English that the Texans were to be treated as prisoners-of-war according to the usages of civilized nations. Fannin was also verbally promised that the volunteers should be returned to the States, provided they pledged themselves not to further aid the Texan.

rebellion. These terms meeting with the approval of the little band, they gave up their arms and under Mexican escort returned to Goliad, where, as prisoners-of-war, they were confined in the old Mission.

The damp, chill atmosphere of the church, through the narrow windows of which the sun filtered slowly, had a depressing effect on the spirits of the captives. They believed, however, the Mexicans were sincere in their agreement, and that as soon as it could be arranged they were to be put on boats and sent to New Orleans. Nevertheless the men were growing homesick. The days dragged by with snail-like pace. Their only food was beef without salt or bread, and crowded together in the old adobe church building their condition was most uncomfortable. Like schoolboys awaiting a holiday, the time of their release seemed long in coming.

Saturday night came—a week having elapsed since their imprisonment. The men's talk ran on their home-going; Fannin spoke of his wife and little ones; some of the volunteers, trying to forget their surroundings, sought to drown nostalgia in jest, as youths are prone to do. Suddenly a Georgian took from his pocket a flute, and no sooner had the first familiar note sounded on the air than a rich, clear tenor caught up the strain.

Immediately all was still.

The tune was "Home, Sweet Home."

Carried away by feeling, every voice lent its aid in joining in the chorus, all save one—and that was Dabney's. With head bowed in his hands he

listened, overwhelmed by sadness. The Virginian realized his life would never be a harmony; there had been a discord, never to be forgotten, never to be corrected; and besides there was a note missing that he felt would have filled him with ineffable sweetness, that would have made of life a psalm. It was Joséfa, her love for him, his love for her, blended together; but fate had played roughly, the string had snapped, and Charles Dabney's heart would never be the same. The words the volunteers were singing seemed to catch the sighing of his soul and set to jangling his old sorrow, his old secret. The echo of the music came to him, disquieting as all echoes are, for with him it breathed the reality of bitter experience. Clearly he heard vocalized what had often rung in his ears:

"A charm from the skies seems to hallow us there,
Which, seek through the world, is ne'er met with elsewhere."

The boyish voices went on, making the old Mission ring with melody such as it had never known before. It was the music of trusting faith sung by Anglo-Saxons.

Dabney, listening, felt memory had no confines, heart ache no boundary, misery no limit. He wondered if this was why Joséfa had been taken from him—if this, his old secret, his old sorrow, was the keynote of his present terrible anguish.

The walls reverberated the soldiers' song:

"The birds singing sweetly that came to my call,
Give me them and the peace of mind dearer than all,
Home, home, sweet, sweet home."

The peace of mind! That was what Dabney knew he had lost, and with it had gone youth and happiness, even though the years had not, for the secret he had hugged to him like the Spartan boy had the fox, had not hurt his vitality, though it had preyed upon his spirit. When the last words of the song died away many an eye was dim, and off in the sacristy of the old Mission knelt a man alone in his agony. The cry of the spirit, the cry of the forsaken surged to his lips, and went back, leaving only a moan to tell of his sorrow. In his hand he held a little brown leathern case, his sole possession, the one relic of his life in Virginia. It was a daguerreotype.

The moon percolating the dust-stained window did not reveal Dabney's face, but its faint beams coruscated the gold in his hair as he bent and kissed it before replacing it in the pocket just above his heart.

The next day was Palm Sunday; the morning dawned clear, bright and beautiful. In the early days of the Mission, in token of Christ's triumphal procession, it had been a custom of the fathers to lead the Indian converts to worship, all carrying boughs, typical of the branches strewn in the Messiah's way, and Nature, seeming in accord with this holy service, mingled the perfumes of spring with the redolence of incense. A different atmosphere now pervaded the sanctuary. It was the breath of war. The old edifice, consecrated to the Prince of Peace, witnessed Mexican soldiers, with unsuppressed oaths, hurriedly forming the Americans into a procession.

Believing this was the day of their emancipation and that the transports awaited them, readily the remnant of the Goliad garrison stepped into place. The building rang with their cheers and huzzaing, for all hearts were light at the thought of being restored to loved ones—all except the Virginian's. Far, far away the world he had known was moving on in its time-worn ruts, and now he was to return to it when his step had grown accustomed to the freedom of the plain. Like the wretched corpse that has suffered shipwreck is given up to an unfriendly shore, Dabney felt that it would have been better to have gone down in the swirling flood. But the joyousness that inflated the hearts of the other volunteers would be impossible to describe. They laughed, jested, and even sung as they marched. Hope was rampant; the prospect of liberty was intoxicating; the realization of enjoying the freedom of the open air made them drunk with delight.

The line went single file; by the side of each of Fannin's men walked a Mexican guard, armed with musket and bayonet. After having marched nearly a mile, the command to halt rang out on the air and the Mexicans were ordered to face to the right, just as Charles Dabney shouted :

"My God ! boys, they-are going to shoot us."

Simultaneously came the report of musketry—and the remnant of the Goliad garrison, some three hundred men, went down, their writhing forms clutched in death's grapple on the Texan plain; but with the tread of heroes their spirits sought Valhalla for the bivouac of the long, long night.

A ball striking above the Virginian's heart, he was among the first to fall, and as he tottered the cry rose from his lips:

"Long live Texas' freedom!"

Then he lay still. A Mexican started to run him through with his bayonet, but there was something on Dabney's face that restrained him. It was the look of a martyr, a saint.

CHAPTER XVII

A DISAPPEARANCE

The mental strain to which Joséfa had been so long subjected terminated in fever. As she tossed in her delirium, one thought seemed ever present with her—that she was forsaken by Daubigny.

“O Carlos!” she would cry out, “where are you?”

Then in heartrending tones she would plead, “Take me with you.” While anon and again the señorita would point in the air, saying, “Oh, how it glitters; take it away; don’t let it strike Carlos!” For her mind, retaining vividly its last impression, reverted always to Big Terrapin’s flashing the rapier in imitation of his slaying the rattlesnake, although Joséfa understood not he had saved her sweetheart’s life, but concluded exactly the contrary.

During her sickness the Priest, assisted by Señora Alvarez, with whom he had obtained lodging, nursed her faithfully, his sad face watching with paternal love every change in his godchild’s condition. Little thought was given to public happenings, for Father Clement’s own private grief engrossing his heart and his time, he paid no attention to the Americans confined in the old Mission of Espiritu Santo.

On Saturday evening, however, Joséfa was better; she had recovered consciousness, and so next morning the Priest, impressed with the fact that the day was Palm Sunday, early arose, and after his orisons went for a walk to enjoy the fresh air and the privilege of communing with nature's God. Despite the sunlight, a preternatural chilliness crept into his veins, which he attributed to the earliness of the day, though it seemed as if evil were afloat in the atmosphere. As he crossed the plaza, what was his surprise to hear his name called, and turning to look the familiar figure of Ramon Urrea met his gaze.

"You are early abroad, Padre. What are you doing here and how is my wilful little niece?"

When the Jesuit told him of Joséfa's illness, the uncle showed no sign of distress.

"So she has been sick, has she? Well, it serves her right for disobeying me and pinning her faith to aliens. But by all the saints she shall yet marry Castrillo!—that is, if he will have her, for I have settled all old scores today in sending the *Americano* where he will never come back. *Caramba!*"

The Priest bent a searching gaze on the officer's face, and a presentiment of danger brought irritability to his voice as he said:

"Speak plainly, Ramon Urrea; I have neither patience nor time for riddles."

With a satanic leer in his blood-shot eyes, the Mexican hissed between his teeth:

"You needn't turn white about the gills, for you are a moment too late to confess your friend Carlos Daubigney, whom I have just ordered shot."

"Mother of God!" exclaimed the Priest, while his breath came hard.

"*Cierto!*" Joséfa's uncle continued, "he was one of the Goliad gang."

Father Clement stood as one petrified, while Urrea continued with a laugh maniacal to hear:

"The idiots! They really believed when they surrendered that we would heed their terms and send them back to the United States, as though it was not General Santa Anna's intention to have all *gringos* shot." And he finished with a vile burst of profanity.

"Accursed be such a government!" declared Father Clement as he listened and heard for the first time a hint of the massacre.

Never had he doubted from Joséfa's account of the rapier and the ring that the Virginian had already met his death at the hand of the Comanche. Believing all Indian's treacherous, the Jesuit explained Big Terrapin's kindness to them as due to gifts, for the old Frenchman's acquaintance with the Chief was too superficial to recognize the nobility elevating this savage above his race. Learning from Ramon Urrea that Charles Dabney was still alive and being marched off to be shot, the Priest became like a madman and bounded away like a bloodhound loosened from the leash. He had accepted Dabney's supposed fate without a murmur,

meekly submissive to the inevitable, but this was different; this was treachery; this was assassination, and the fury of the Frenchman knew no bounds.

Without any definite plan the Jesuit rushed on. Señora Alvarez, having already heard of the fate awaiting the Texan volunteers, had quitted her house, and with her long black hair streaming around her, she looked like a goddess of wrath as she called down the vengeance of Heaven on such a butcher as Santa Anna, for though a Mexican herself, she was a woman, with a woman's heart to feel for woe. The Priest only tarried a minute to caution her, as she valued Joséfa's life, not to breathe a word of this atrocity to her; then on he sped, his anguish alternating in prayers and curses. The taste of man's cruelty, villainy, perfidy was gall in his mouth. Passing the Mission he spied a horse tied, whose finely decorated trappings indicated it as the property of a Mexican officer. Unfastening the rein, quickly the Priest leaped into the saddle and broke into a thundering gallop. The minutes that followed were of furious haste; the horse, flogged into a terrific gait, went with head bent low and neck stretched out—it was a terrible ride, the landscape became a blur, the Priest saw only through the clear atmosphere the black column ahead. Just as he succeeded in coming up with them the peal of musketry rang in his ear—and Father Clement must need seek Dabney among the dead.

Riding up to the commanding officer the Jesuit spoke:

"I am a priest of the Church. A friend dear to me has been shot; may I have his body for burial?"

"If you can find it, but hasten, for General Santa Anna has ordered these Texans burned like the dogs of the Alamo."

With a shudder Father Clement turned away. Dismounting, he threw the bridle over his arm, and leading the horse, approached the massacred. When one seeks to identify a friend among three hundred dead men the task is not an easy one. Bending to peer at the faces of the slain, the tears gushed from Father Clement's eyes when he saw how young they were. One soldier after another was turned over, but not until he had nearly reached the end of the line did he find Dabney.

The Virginian lay partly hidden by a volunteer who had fallen across him. Dragging the corpse off, the Priest bent over Charles, who was covered with gore from the comrade stretched above him. Dabney was a ghastly sight, for blood clammy and wet had gathered and welled and matted the curly, sunlit hair that Father Clement knew crowned no other brow save Joséfa's love. As he bent over him, the Virginian blinked. Seeing he was still alive, the Frenchman whispered:

"Do not fear, *mon ami*."

Recognizing his voice, instantly Dabney opened his eyes.

"I am not hurt much," he said. "I was feigning death, hoping to crawl away when night came on."

"Silence!" commanded the Jesuit, "and feign death still, that I may save you."

By an effort well-nigh superhuman, the Priest lifted Daubigny and threw him across the horse. Then, leading the animal, he wended his way toward the marsh. Nobody hindered him, seeing he was a priest, for the Mexicans were already busy collecting brush wherewith to burn the slain.

When Dabney heard that Joséfa still lived, light and darkness, heaven and earth seemed to swim in chaos before his mind. He wished to rush to her, to see her with his own eyes, to hold her little brown hands, to kiss her ruby-red lips, to satisfy himself that his senses were not playing him false; that he heard aright, that she really lived, breathed, and was growing well. It was with difficulty that the Priest could restrain him, but at last his passion, his longing was amenable to reason and he saw the futility of such an idea, the rashness, the utter ruin it would involve—though it was hard, terribly hard not to see Joséfa.

As they were now out of sight in the jungle of cane, Father Clement allowed Dabney to alight, and cutting up his cassock, bandaged as best he could the wounded arm.

"*Ma foi!*" he laughed, "it seems fate has decreed that I should be the surgeon of Monsieur Daubigny." And with the loquacity natural to him, the Frenchman continued:

"It was a miracle that you escaped, *mon cher ami*, for the ball hit right over your heart and then glanced off. A bird with a broken wing may fly again, but if the heart be wounded—well, *monsieur*, he would never sing again."

"And if he tried," added Dabney, "the sound would have no music in it."

"Your good angel saved you this time," commented the Priest.

"Yes," answered Dabney meditatively.

"Think over it, *mon garçon*, as a warning. The good God has been merciful, but He will not always chide."

Then, after promising Dabney to deliver numerous messages to Joséfa, the Priest pressed his hand, bidding him take the mare and make his escape.

"I am lucky," the Virginian said as he mounted, "for I never saw a finer piece of horseflesh. I wonder to whom she belongs?"

"I wonder," aimlessly repeated the Priest; then with a wave of his hand he bade him adieu.

On Dabney rode, the horse carrying him swiftly across the level loam. Toward the south the prairie stretched luxuriant with long grass and rank weeds, a shimmer of brownish green; westward, hugging the river bottom, was a heavy growth of cane—in the distance majestically rose a timber island of cypress and magnolia, while overhead, like a dome of sapphire, stretched the Texan sky, as blue as Italian scenery, even like unto Naples itself.

Joséfa lived! Oh, glorious thought! She had escaped the fall of the Alamo like he had been spared from the Goliad massacre. Was not destiny indissolubly linking their fates? She lived and he knew still loved him. The tumult of a thousand waterfalls beat in his ears. She loved him with all the passionate ardor of her Spanish soul; this assurance

was sweeter than spikenard, more precious than frankincense. It put new marrow in his bones. It made him resolute to do his best in fighting for his country because it was her country; to free the land from the trespassing of the tyrant so that it would be a home tranquil and sweet, for her and for him.

A crushing weight of a great grief was lifted from the Priest's heart and a long sigh of relief escaped him as he saw Dabney depart, and lifting his eyes to heaven he uttered a prayer of thanksgiving that his friend, Joséfa's love, had been spared. He wished that he might hasten back to Señora Alvarez's adobe and tell his godchild the joyful news—that Daubigney had not been slain by the Comanche, that he had also miraculously escaped the massacre of the morning. Joséfa, though, had been very ill and the Priest feared lest she be excited beyond her strength, but he would tell her part of it, at least, that Big Terrapin had saved the Virginian from the rattlesnake—that would interest her, that would hasten convalescence. Such were Father Clement's thoughts as he emerged from the canebrake, but the surprises of the day were not yet over, for he observed a woman coming in his direction.

"Eh, Niña!" he exclaimed in greeting, shaking his head gloomily, for that she had become a camp-follower was evident; nevertheless, he put the question:

"What brings you to Goliad?"

The woman knew he read her like an open book.

"Padre," she said resentfully, "I did not seek you for a confession and neither do I meddle with your business by inquiring why you are in Goliad instead of San 'Tone. What I am trying to find out is, can you tell me what has become of General Urrea's horse?"

"I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, and so I cannot tell," replied the Jesuit.

His manner was irritating.

"Well," snapped she, a blaze of anger scintillating from her eyes, "General Urrea is in a perfect fury, for 'twas the fleetest foot in the Mexican army. She was named after me, only he always called her 'Lady Niña,' and he left her tied by the Mission door."

"Yes," said the Priest reminiscently, "I myself remember seeing a horse standing there."

"But she has disappeared and I would like to know where she has gone."

"So would I," heartily agreed the Jesuit as he passed on.

Niña's mentioning the old Mission made the Priest involuntarily gaze in that direction, and he noticed a red glow, such as the sun never makes, lighting the sky. For a moment he thought the prairie was ablaze, and then, recollecting the officer's words, the Jesuit knew it came from the bonfire the Mexicans had made of the massacred. It seemed as if Medusa were shaking her hair of serpents to the breezes as the flaring flames, hissing like demons, shot heavenward, and then, as if ashamed, sunk quickly into seething vapors of black smoke.

Looking at the old Mission and the fire-lit sky, the Priest broke forth:

"Slain between the temple and the altar of freedom, their blood will cry out from the ground!

"Oh, Palm Sunday that should witness such butchery! Oh, day of days to be thus desecrated!

"Mexicans, in your ignorance you are burning incense to the God of Liberty as truly as the heathen erected their altar to the Unknown God!

"Without the shedding of blood there is no salvation; Texas will be redeemed!

"Men have their Gethsemanes and nations their Goliads!"

Uttering these lamentations, Father Clement wearily turned his face to seek Joséfa. The glare of light was fading from the sky. A tiny speck like a gnat floated in the eternal blue. Lower and lower it came, with wings outspread; gracefully it soared along, coming closer to earth. When clearly in view and the haze of distance had disappeared, it took the horrible shape of a bird of prey, evidently reconnoitering for the flock of vultures that soon gathered to pick the charred flesh from the bones of the Goliad garrison.

Señora Alvarez was awaiting Father Clement in her doorway. The expression on her face startled him; it told him something had happened, something that her lips hated to speak.

"For God's sake," he said, "what is it?"

"Joséfa!" she gasped, and tears rained down her cheeks, "Joséfa was gone when I came in from the plaza!"

The Priest pushed by her and entered the house; the woman followed close at his heels, weeping silently.

The girl's bed was empty. That she had not departed in delirium was evinced by the absence of her clothes; they too were gone; not a trace of the señorita remained save the tousled bed.

A moan of unutterable anguish escaped from Father Clement; that the señorita had been spirited away by Ramon Urrea was his immediate conclusion. He remembered her uncle's avowal to marry her to Castrillo—that was the solution of the mystery. In vain the Jesuit tried to find her. No one knew, or at least would tell, a word about it. A search throughout Goliad revealed nothing save that she had as completely disappeared as if the ground had opened and swallowed her up. The Priest prayed and hoped that perhaps she had wandered away, and yet he knew in his heart that this conclusion was illogical, invalid. He believed to a certainty that she had been abducted, for the words of Urrea spoken that morning kept ringing in his ears like the death-knell of all hope, "She shall yet marry Castrillo!" A helpless fury, a rage settled upon the Jesuit as he essayed in vain to find the haughty Spaniard. That was why Urrea had wished to find his horse, the fleetest foot in all Mexico, the one Daubigny was riding, over which the Priest had laughed as a travesty; that horse had been intended to speed Joséfa away—Father Clement saw it now in the light of a tragedy.

The next morning he came upon Ramon Urrea, and it was well for the Don's safety that the old Frenchman did not meet him alone. At first the Spaniard feigned great surprise, even blatant distress, that the Jesuit's searching keenness was quick

in discerning threadbare; then in language loud and interspersed with strong oaths, he vowed he knew naught of his niece's whereabouts. The Priest laying his hand on the speaker's arm, with a touch light though it was, imposed silence.

"In God's name tell me what you have done with Joséfa, the child of my bosom? Speak, I command you, speak!"

The old man's voice was tremulous with emotion, his hair had whitened, his face turned aged in the night.

For a moment Ramon Urrea looked at him, awed by Father Clement's manner, that in times past could cower him. Now with the leer of a drunkard he burst in a loud laugh, saying:

"Birds leave the home nest when they mate."

He winked significantly, a sorry spectacle, and after hiccoughing, mumbled in a maudlin way:

"Its—too—long—a — tale — to — hear — now, *caramba!* I — will — tell — you — maybe — some — other — time." And off he staggered, while the Priest, utterly powerless, completely helpless, burst into tears, the tears of a desolate, broken-hearted old man.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN THE MESHES OF THE SPIDER

It is beyond the limited scope of this story to enter into the details of Texas' trouble with Mexico, for that is the prerogative of history, not romance—though romance is reality and fact surpasses fiction.

Affairs in Mexico were not as tranquil as Santa Anna might have wished them. He coquetted with the Church; he flattered the Army; he posed as a patriot; and yet peace had not crowned his efforts or prosperity his plans. Having reduced the garrison of the Alamo and Goliad to ashes, he sought to terrorize the Texans by penetrating the interior, leaving the burnt towns of Harrisburg, Gonzales, and San Felipe as milestones in his march.

"Gin'ral Santy Anny is not th' fool Oi'm thinkin' f'r meself, though he is a mur'dhrin' villyun, a divvil sure, none greater in th' whole wurruld," spoke up Patrick Jack; "yit, says Oi, he himsilf knows that th' Texan pathrites are not be-at dacent. Th' Spanyard scoundrel raymimbers th' Alamo; an' he don't fe-al aisy or whoi should he kape pesterin' us loike a green floi buzzin' r-round ye'er nose on a hot day, Oi'm a astin'?"

"It is plain enough what he's doing it for," answered a Texan named Tom Green." It is to pre-

vent the United States from allowing us to enter the Union, for of course as long as we are at war the States as a power are not going to side with either party, though all their sympathies are with us."

"Begorra! Oi will nivir f'rgit th' Texans winnin' me gr-ratitude by gittin' me an' poor Bill Travis out o' pr-rison where th' Mexicans had shut us up f'r no r-reason at awll, at awll, unless it be th' foolish wan of our bein' colonists, jist dacent white people. But a ma-an niver knows what he's bor-rn f'r. It's mebbe to be a gin'ral, a pr-resident, or jist a plain cor-rpse widout evin a toom'stun ter tell he was gr-reat, much less a wake to give pleasure to his fr-riend's f'r sorrowin' over him. Now Oi seem ter be cut out f'r a her-ro all roight, an' Oi'm willin' to die loike a fightin'-cock, but Oi don't pr-ray to be kilt; howiver, who wud have b'laved, f'r niver did Oi dr-ream it whin Oi left owld Oireland, that Patr-rick Jack wud be the innicent cause o' a moighty war; that th' Texans wud get riled an' consader it insolince av th' Mexican governmint ter put me in pr-rison when f'r toime immemorial some av me mither's people, th' McKeevies, have thought it nawthin' to go to jail. But Americky is different f'r Kildare an' Oi'm no longer a peasant, but a thrue sojer, a pathrite!"

"Well," remarked Charles Dabney, "it's no use our letting the Mexicans use Texas as their parade-ground. What we have got to do is to carry the war into Santa Anna's own country, then he will let us alone."

"Roight ye ar-re!" spoke up Jack. "Let us carry this wur-ruk av war in th' hear-rt av th' inimy's counthry, an' give 'em a treminjous wallop, an' win a

glorious victhry over th' pizenous reptiles, f'r there ain't no surer cur-re than foightin' th' Divvil with fire; it's his desthruccion annyhow."

"You bet! we'll give Santy Anny a taste of his own medicine and see how he relishes it." The last speaker was the youngest man in camp, though in stature, a perfect Hercules, and on account of the size of his feet his comrades seldom called him by any other name than Big Foot Wallace.

* * * * *

Thus it happened Texas troops collected near the frontier, eager to be led into Mexico, to cross the Rio Bravo del Norte, and carry the war into the enemy's land.

This was opposed by those in command.

The men, however, who were itching to fight, to avenge Santa Anna's atrocities, were not volunteers from other States, but the product of the time, the Texas Rangers, men whose strong, determined spirit finally wrested order out of chaos.

The Ranger was a new figure in history, modelled on the guerrilla type. His dress was plain. A slouch hat shielded usually bluish-gray eyes. On the high pommel of his saddle coiled a lasso. He was as much at home on the prairie and as independent of the world as a battleship in mid-sea, for on his arm rested a long rifle, while the herds on the plain constituted the sole commissary to which he applied. Nearly three hundred men of this stamp and mind had gathered on the border and were not easily to be dissuaded from their purpose of invading Mexico. Resolute, steadfast, willing to bear the responsibility, willing to run the risk, their resolve was firm. If

Texas did not sanction their course, they would go as individuals, banded together under the command of those of their own number, who were fully competent to lead this expedition—men such as the gallant Green, and Cameron, a brave and brawny Scot.

So one night, when darkness veiled their movements, they cast the die and crossed the Rio Grande at the Mexican town of Mier. With a dash the Rangers surprised the pickets and slipped into Mier, fighting their way as they went, until, nearing the plaza, a terrific discharge of shrapnel swept the street, causing the Texans to take shelter behind the protecting walls of adjacent adobes. There ensconced as if in a fort, their situation was an advantageous one. It commanded the plaza where were positioned the town's guns. When daylight came the Mexicans attempted to turn their ordnance on the enemy, but to no purpose, for the Rangers opened fire upon them with their deadly marksmanship. As soon as the smoke cleared away the Texans were ready again. A dozen cannoneers fell with linstock in hand. Desperate, the Mexicans sent their bravest men, the *Presidio ales*, the town guards, to try to do the work.

"Fire for your life, boys!" yelled Green.

A prompt discharge followed, so that not a Mexican lived to reach the cannon, while a cheer went up from the *Americanos*.

The Mexicans then, crawling along on their flat roofs, sought to lasso their artillery and drag it from the field; but it was difficult work with the Texans' bullets raining upon them like hail. The sun, an all-seeing eye, looked down on the streets of Mier run-

ning with blood, for the Mexicans, with their inaccurate *escoepa* shooting, were but as targets for the practiced Rangers. As their soldiery could accomplish naught, Mexican subtlety went to work. On the air sounded a great blowing of trumpets, as if legions of cavalry were arriving, and a white flag was seen approaching the Texan stronghold. The courier who bore it brought a message to the effect that the Mexicans so admired the valor of the Rangers that they did not wish them to meet with the fate of the Alamo, and offered them surrender, as reinforcements seventeen hundred strong had already arrived and three hundred more were momentarily due from Monterey, hence if they continued to fight, no quarter need be expected.

The Texans believed and were duped.

It was all a hoax—a bluff game; a few more minutes' fighting would have meant a victory for the Rangers, for the Mexicans had received no succor.

"Let us die like soldiers," said Dabney, "or we may die like dogs!" but his words availed not, for the message received would have had its effect on the morale of more disciplined soldiers than those Texan Rangers, the majority of whom favored surrender. Their leaders, though, bitterly opposed so doing, yet they could not bear the thought of sacrificing their men's lives in a forlorn cause.

The battle had been fought with great obstinacy on both sides. The Texans were, as they supposed, now at great hazard. Green called for a hundred volunteers to go with him and cut their way through the enemy's lines; but Charles Dabney, Big Foot

Wallace, Patrick Jack, and a handful of others were all that rallied to his summons.

The interpreter reading the terms of surrender took pains to change the phrase, "All who give up their arms will be treated with the consideration which is in accord with the magnanimous Mexican nation," to, "With all the honors and consideration of prisoners-of-war."

"Men," cautioned Dabney, "it's not worth the paper it's written on—it is another of their lies—remember Goliad!" But despite his warning, soon all the Texans marched out to the plaza and began stacking arms. Green, Dabney, Jack, and Wallace, though, never budged. Turning to them, Captain Cameron said:

"Boys, it's no use our holding out longer; they are all gone but us, and we'll have to knock under."

Silently they huddled near Cameron, glaring like tigers upon the enemy swarming around them.

"I shall never surrender to a Mexican," said Dabney, and he gave his rifle a blow that shattered it; just as the gallant Green, following his sentiments, snapped his sword across his knee.

"For God's sake, Big Foot, give them yours!" urged Cameron.

"I obey my commanding officer," the young man answered, as he handed up the gun that had done such good service all day." While Patrick Jack, following suit, said:

"Shure, faith, an' it is not a cow'rdliest surrender on yer part or mine; f'r to obey ordhers is the jooty av ivry thrue sojer, so Oi have always heerd annyhow—an' may Gawd in hivin presarve us awll."

The town of Mier was jubilant over the victory. The dead Texans were stripped of their clothing and dragged through the street by the Mexican cavalry, amidst the cheers of the populace.

"Just look!" exclaimed Wallace to Dabney," and see what we've got to expect. If the same ain't in store for us, my name ain't Big Foot!"

Charles Dabney, though, did not look. He had buried his face in his hands and was thinking of Joséfa. Would he ever see her again, now that he was in the enemy's land as well as in their power. He longed to write her a letter, to tell her why he came to Mier; to assure her he had followed his conscience; that he had done it believing it was for the best, for her, for Texas, and for himself. But he had no time to do so, for despite the Mexicans' promise to keep the prisoners near the border, convenient for exchanging them, the Rangers were put in irons and started on the long march for the City of Mexico, being treated with great cruelty by their captors. In all the towns through which they passed they were paraded for the amusement of jeering mobs. Their march led them through Monterey, beautiful Monterey, with its old cathedral and market-place, its adobes of quaint Moorish pattern and mean *jacales* of reeds—all shimmering white alike in the glorious sunshine. The natives pelted the *Americanos* with stones, clods and eggs, hooting:

"*Muere los gringos!*" "Down with the heretics!"
"Death to the *ladrones!*"

The condition of the prisoners was most wretched. Footsore and weary, they trudged over the steep, rough road. Rains, cold winds from the mountains, the Sierra Madre; miserable camp-fires and the poorest food, all conspired to make their misery complete. The scene was a diversity of cacti, Spanish daggers, prickly-pear, mesquite and chaparral; with higher up the silver sheen of pine and cypress and the deep green of spruce and fir; then precipitous gorges, long defiles, wide plateaux and the mountains, wild, weird, rock-ribbed and sombre, their craggy ledges fit only for the eagle's aerie.

Each day's march brought the Rangers farther into the meshes of the spider. They longed to escape, their talk ran on nothing else; but it was easier to plan than to perfect. Escape seemed a fanciful, an impossible, yea a mad idea; for the Texans, with hands tied behind them with raw-hide thongs, were well guarded by Mexicans armed with bayonets and *escoepas*, short bull-dog muskets. In the distance now loomed a white quadrangular building, that looked like a fort or a *calaboz*, a prison. It was the Hacienda of Salado. Here the Rangers were marched into confinement.

"It's a divvil of a place!" was Patrick Jack's comment as he looked around him. The deep-set windows, high from the floor, emphasized the thickness of the walls. Through these small openings the sun at its zenith could only send feeble glinting rays of light, weird as a corpse candle. That some awful fate awaited them the Texans felt certain—but in their extremity, their desperation, a flicker of hope came into their breasts when the Mexicans untied

their hands. Small as this liberty was, the freedom of one's hands whispers a possibility—and new zeal, new courage buoyed them up. Soon a plan for escape was hatched.

It was agreed that in the morning, when many of the guard stacked guns to cook breakfast, Cameron was to give the signal by throwing up his hat. No sooner was this done than the Rangers fell upon the Mexicans to overpower them. Green, Dabney, Wallace and Jack were the leaders. Each had in his fist the strength of a giant, and in the first rush the *Americanos*, filled with lust of hate, soon sprawled the guard on the floor. They went down like an ox before a butcher. With a quick leap over the bodies of the stunned, Dabney reached the inner court, the *plaza de armas*, where the arms and ammunition were kept. Like a pack of wolves the Rangers followed, trampling the sentinels under foot, for the *Americanos* had the advantage in size and strength when it came to a fist-fight.

It was early in the morning; the Mexican officers were caught napping.

Seizing a gun with a bayonet on it, Charles Dabney kept off his assailants until the Texans could secure muskets. Reckless of consequence he stood his ground, implacable, ferocious, panting. The Mexicans cried to one another to brain him, and in their rage they made at him with their swords, but his strength seemed superhuman, his activity and courage marvelous, his dare-devil bravery awesome.

Soon the Rangers were in the open courtyard. There the cavalry guarding the gate were also sur-

prised. Before they had time to leap in their saddles, the Texans were seizing their horses. Hoarse shouts of rage, oaths English and Mexican filled the air. The place was a bedlam; a mass of men fighting like bulldogs clench, with tooth and nail.

It was glorious to behold the valor of the Rangers; nothing could withstand their fury. The Mexicans were as thistle-down before the wind—the Mier prisoners had effected their escape and were on the road to the Rio Grande, to Texas and to freedom.

"Yer naden't be followin' us!" shouted Patrick Jack, shaking his fist in defiant farewell; "'cause nawthin' but th' Banshee on a pale horse can catch us—Erin go bragh!" and off the Irishman galloped on an old dun mule.

Then the noise and the curses died away, and the only sound was the tattoo of hurrying hoofs. Hard riding brought Saltillo in sight next morning.

The Rangers unwisely deciding it was best to avoid the town, took to the mountains. The region was rough, arid, dreary, desolate, and the men felt terribly few in that wilderness of space. Ere long they found themselves lost.

The sun shone with lights that would have delighted a painter, but to the eyes of the pilgrims, blurred by heat and aching for the sight of water, it threw a cruel, pitiless glamour over the charm of landscape—the sublimity of Nature, for nowhere is scenery more majestic than in Mexico. The elemental grandeur of mountains with ragged outline, sterile of aspect, rose like battlements impregnable, while feudally mote-like, gray cañons challenged access, and dotting the alkali, clay table-land, the

plateau, were great patches of disintegrated lava, like missiles hurled by a giant in volcanic wrath. Below stretched parched valleys, with only here and there dull-colored cacti, thorny sentinels of sterility—and yet seen through the elusive effects of atmosphere, sky, mountain, and desert blend into a perfect picture, a glorious panorama, fresh from the brush of the Master Artist. It was a mirage though, intended only for man's admiration, not for his sustenance.

The days that followed brought the horrors of starvation. Without food or water the condition of the Texans became desperate. Killing their horses and mules, the men not only greedily devoured the flesh, but drank the animals' hot blood, as if it had been water from a bubbling spring.

Their tongues became parched and began to swell, and some of the Rangers, unable to go farther, fell dead in their tracks. A few sought to allay their agony by chewing prickly pear leaves, but this only added to their misery. Others scratched in the ground for cool earth to apply to their aching throats, before falling delirious to die, their bodies to furnish food for coyotes. Sometimes standing straight and sometimes crawling on all fours, still others crept far up into the cañons, where the sky seemed like a ribbon of blue, and the pitiless vault of rock shut them in forever. Several became insane, and stealing away took to the mountains, and only the vultures ever knew their fate. But most of the Rangers tried to stay together, pushing madly, blindly forward. Neither high walls nor yawning abyss stopped them. Like mountain-goats

they leaped across chasms—running, stumbling, falling, dying; their one idea was water, water—WATER! Liberty was forgotten, everything was forgotten save the thirst unquenchable and all-consuming. Toward evening the heavens would become opalescent chalcedony, then from jasper-red to shaded-carnelian; and the hope born of the morning died with the night.

The Mexican cavalry, meanwhile, with pack-mules and food, were scouring the country in pursuit of the fugitives. Searching parties continued to bring in stragglers until the recaptured numbered a hundred and seventy odd. They were tied together with ropes and taken back to Salado.

Dabney and Big Foot Wallace walked side by side. Capable of great hardship, their powerful physiques had not succumbed to the sufferings endured, though their faces looked pinched and haggard. Yet Dabney's countenance was calm, his head unbent. His step might be compared to that of one treading the way to Calvary. The Virginian believed that his end was near; he felt that soon his restless soul would cease its striving. Memory, like a two-edged sword, brought him happiness and anguish. He rejoiced that he had given his life in a noble cause, that he had fought for Texas, Joséfa's country, and yet it was hard to resign love with all its hopes and promises and golden dreams. But there was his old sorrow, his secret, the anguish that gnawed at his heart with the keen, sharp tooth of remorse, never to be blunted by time. Fate was punishing him now for the rashness of youth—stern Fate that was inexorable, imperious, pitiless.

So deep was Dabney in meditation that he did not notice some Mexicans digging a ditch close by the Hacienda. Neither did he hear Big Foot Wallace's remark:

"I guess Santa Anna means that for our graves."

"Weel," said Cameron, dropping as he sometimes did into broad Scotch, "I would nae wonder, the scoon'el." Then turning to Dabney, "How think ye?" And receiving no reply, queried, "What ails ye, mon, are ye daft?"

But the question did not break the spell of the Virginian's mood, and as he was again marched into confinement, the prison atmosphere increased his melancholy and extinguished hope. Fatalist that he was, he brooded over never seeing Joséfa again, never kissing her lips that were ruby-red, never feeling her warm arms about his neck, never holding her little brown hands in his. And with the thought of her came the memory of another, a face of English type, of girlish beauty, one who had loved him dearly. Memory suggested that he also owed her a farewell, an explanation.

Turning to a Mexican, the Virginian begged to have his chains removed and to be allowed to write a letter. Something in the prisoner's appeal seemed to touch the soldier, who acceded by unfastening the handcuffs and supplying paper and pen; then, with Mexican consistency, or perhaps repenting the indulgence, he refused to give him ink; so that the soldiers, looking on, laughed derisively as if the entire proceeding had been meant for a jest. But Dabney murmured not. With his teeth he succeeded

in opening a vein in his left arm, so that the blood trickled out; then he turned to Wallace, saying:

"Big-Foot, if you live and I don't, to ever get back to our old home,—I mean Virginia not Texas,—will you do me a favor?—will you deliver a letter?"

"I will, God helping me," replied the Ranger sadly.

Dabney then spreading the paper on his knee, rapidly wrote:—

"MY DEAR ANGELICA:

"If this letter ever reaches you, you will see it is not penned with ink, but written with my life's blood, flowing from a heart that through all these years has never forgotten you. Strange that may sound, considering my silence, nevertheless it is true, for I am soon to appear before Eternal Justice, where I would not go with a lie on my lips.

"I am writing to tell you, Angelica, that I have given my life in the cause of liberty—I have proven that I am not a coward. I have tried after all to be worthy of the lineage from whence I sprung and to make the D'Aubigny motto, '*Vincit, qui se vincit*,' in verity my own.

"Even now I feel your spirit hovering near me, unworthy though I be—for you have ever been my guardian angel. It was your daguerreotype, dear, that turned the enemy's ball at Goliad—go to history for the details of that massacre, for my time is too—"

As Dabney wet his pen to continue his sentence, a Mexican leaned over, snatched the letter and tore it into shreds. The Virginian bit his lip and lifted his arm with a meaning gesture. His fist came

down like a piston as he flung the Greaser from him, reeling and bruised. A musket was immediately cocked in his face while his guard reshackled his hands. But Carlos Daubigney's thoughts, untrammelled, framed another missive on the tablets of his mind, and prayer took it to the ear of Him Who is Love. It was the wish, the hope, that in that realm where all is peace and the heart's desire is forever satisfied, he might meet Joséfa again.

CHAPTER XIX

A PROMISE IS DEMANDED.

In one of the small cells of the convent of the Capuchinas in Monterey, close by the Bishop's Palace, a young girl wandered restlessly up and down, ever and anon casting anxious glances into the street. How she came to be there was more than she could clearly arrange in her own mind, for naught did she remember of having taken a journey; and yet her surroundings were convincing that she was in a city far from home, far from San Antonio de Bexar, far from Texas—for she was none other than Joséfa Urrea. The delicately chiselled face, pale from recent illness, appeared white as marble neath the mass of ringlets that shone with a blue gloss, like the glint of a crow's breast in the sun. The big black eyes that used to twinkle with fun as she sang to her guitar, wore in them now a look of grief, giving to her expression that touch of spirituality, such as is associated with the pictures of the Madonna.

A faint puff of breeze came up from the South; the vast calm, the quiet, the repose of the convent's atmosphere was broken only by the soft, plaintive carol of a little brown bird that had flown to the window, there perched itself and begun to twitter

in that slow minor key harmonious with the señorita's feelings. Resting her arm on the embrasure, she leaned her chin on her hand and gazed sadly, blankly in the distance.

Stretching majestically southward loomed the ragged, sombre peaks of the Sierra Madre, a bulwark impregnable. Toward these mountains, like a twisted string, meandered a hazy trail, the old Saltillo road, along which Carlos Daubigny and the Texan captives had been marched a short while before.

The dizzy slopes of another ridge, the Silla, lay to the east, its dangerous ledges mellowed by tender green; while westward the horizon was broken by the Mitras, behind the lofty crest of which the sun nightly lost itself in a maze of gorgeous color, like the tints of tulips, red and gold. And in the bosom of the valley, close to the *ojo de agua*, the great spring, with its perennial gushing waters, nestled the city of Monterey, beautiful at all times but sublime in the evening. Around the city, like a horseshoe, wound the San Juan River, through a valley of rippling barley fields, of blossoming maguey, with here and there groves of lemon, fig, and orange—a landscape of the tropics. It was little wonder that this spot, three hundred years before, had so impressed the Viceroy of old Spain that he selected it as a site worthy of the seat of government for this the province of Nuevo Leon, the richest in luxuriance of all the provinces in the realm of Mexico. And it was less wonder still, considering the vanity and weakness of human nature, that he named it for himself, this Conde de Monterey, for a proud Castil-

lian was he; and he rode into the valley of the San Juan escorted by cavaliers and soldiers with arquebuses and lances; their banners of white, rich in armorial bearings, floating to the gentle breezes. And here the Spaniards had taken possession and planted the cross on the very spot where now rose the Church of St. Francis, the good saint who had guided the expedition so successfully. The old church, the Bishop's Palace, the citadel and the Convent of the Capuchinas all bespoke the antiquity of the place, the age of Monterey.

But Joséfa's gaze saw neither beauty of landscape nor the quaint Moorish pattern of the city, for the tears that dimmed her vision reflected only the images in her heart—the idols of her soul, Carlos Daubigny and Father Clement. And so she did not hear the door pushed softly ajar or see the sweet-faced nun who quietly set down a tray of tempting fruits, a little goblet of white wine; then lighted a candle in a sconce above which hung a crucifix, and having knelt, crossed herself, and whispered an *ave*, hastened away. Passing down the hall the nun was stopped by the Superieur, an elderly woman with the face of a saint.

"How is the little blossom, the poor little lamb?" asked she in a voice of cultured Spanish, vibrant with sympathy.

"*Madre*," answered the nun, "she mends slowly, that is, if she mends at all. She seems heart-broken, like a dove that has lost its mate. One may put it in a cage, feed it, tender it; but it does not coo, it does not preen its feathers. It will either beat its poor

wings out against the bars or die slowly like a flower that fades—but it will surely die in the end.”

The Superieur sighed, a sigh that seemed to indicate that she appreciated something of the sentiment the little nun was trying to explain; and then she opened the door and entered Joséfa’s room.

The girl still stood by the window, only her head had sunk on her arm, and the long black ringlets dropped in a mass about her shoulders. It was an attitude of deep dejection, of utter woe. The Superieur bent over and kissed her gently on the forehead; then seating herself, she gathered Joséfa in her arms like a mother might a babe.

“My child,” she said, “words fail me to comfort you; but whisper your sorrow into the heart of the Blessed Mother, the Most Holy Virgin, and peace will come into your heart, the peace ‘that passeth all understanding.’” Joséfa weeping, she continued:

“Try to be brave, my little one, my *chiquita*, try to take courage. The troubles of this life are short-lived compared with the happiness that is beyond, that is eternal.”

The Superieur paused, heaved a deep, long sigh and then added:

“I hate to disturb you, but the vicar has come and brought with him a gentleman who wishes to see you. He awaits us in the parlor.”

“Who is he?” asked Joséfa, springing up like one electrified.

“Come, my dear, and see.”

The woman drew the girl’s arm through hers and lead her down the corridor. The vesper bells were ringing and the nuns of the convent, in their dark

dressess, were passing in long and solemn order along the cloister, on their way to the chapel. When the Superieur reached the refectory she turned toward the left, and pushing open a huge door of carved mahogany, bade Joséfa enter. The room, a rectangle, was large, sparsely furnished almost to bareness, and dimly lighted, save for a huge chandelier that hung near the wall opposite the door. The reason for its position was obvious, as it threw into bold relief a picture that was the sole ornament of the room. It was Titian's Entombment of The Saviour, a gift from Charles the Fifth of Spain to his domain of Mexico. Many tourists view it today in the Guadalupe Cathedral, whence it was afterwards taken to preserve it from the vandalism of war at the siege of Monterey.

Joséfa had never before seen a painting from the brush of one of the world's masters, and it held her spellbound. The lights, the shadows, the Christ face, the faces of his followers, loving yet mystified, gentle and reverent. The great hope of a temporal deliverance, of a Messiah, crushed in their hearts; their countenances mirroring disappointment, defeat, sorrow. The spirit of the picture, with its misery and mystery, touched the girl deeply, reflecting her own feelings, bringing to her darkened faith Father Clement's teaching; shedding a light on the clouds in her heart. And in this hour of conflict with self, of soul-wrestling, when she was trying to believe that whatever is, is for the best, ultimately, finally; and that some day the ways of Providence will be made clear and earthly failures shown as celestial victories—her groping trustfulness received a blow

that caused it to totter and fall, for the voice of Castrillo, soft, deep and mellow, broke the silence of her reverie.

Joséfa started back, speechless with surprise, for so absorbed had her thoughts been on the painting and its suggestion that the reason for her being summoned to the parlor had entirely escaped her memory—her visitor then was Juan Castrillo. She realized she was alone with him, this suitor, who was as mean a scoundrel as any who drew breath in Mexico, and who, of all creatures on earth, she least cared to see.

"You!" she cried; "you, Don Juan Castrillo!" and her voice, though ringing with contempt, was piteous in its tremor. A sob rose in her throat, but she choked it back and forthwith began an accusation, charging him and her uncle with her incarceration.

The haughty Spaniard bit his moustache as he listened; a frown black as midnight flitted across his brow and passed away, leaving his countenance like marble. Joséfa's attitude touched him, melting the resentment, the injured pride caused by her greeting. Slim though she was, she had drawn herself up until her look was majestic, queenly—and yet after all the señorita was only a girl, frail, helpless, dependent. Castrillo himself had changed since their last meeting. The storming of the Alamo, the belief that she was among the dead, the agony of that hour had had its effect so far as Joséfa was concerned. It had taught him that he really loved her; that she was more to him than any other woman; that his love for her was the only pure passion that his vile heart had ever known. And yet he was a man who would when he would, and whose purpose to marry her was deep,

peremptory, coercive, stringent. Resistance and pleading would avail naught with such as he.

"Why are you here?" he repeated. "Suffice it to say, those who love you best deemed it was wisest."

"That is not true," contradicted Joséfa. "Neither you nor Uncle Ramon could love me like Father Clement."

"Father Clement," Castrillo reiterated, with a sneer half scorn, half contempt. "No, Joséfa, I could never love you like Father Clement—mine is the love of a lover, as different from his paternal affection as cream from skimmed milk; but even he whom you hold so high could not have selected a better refuge in this time of war than a home with these holy sisters."

The girl looked at him defiantly.

"Let me promise you," he added, "by all that I hold sacred, on my honor as a gentleman, by my sword as a Mexican officer, that I shall do you no harm, that my object and hope in life is for your welfare, your happiness—and mine."

His hand went to his heart and he made a deep obeisance, like a hero in tragedy. Joséfa laughed outright, though it was the mirthless laugh of one bordering on hysteria. However, it cut Castrillo like a knife, making him forget his lofty manner and bringing him to himself. For the space of several moments silence reigned supreme, then the lover's voice spoke, low and full of tenderness:

"I have come to tell you this, to assure you that here no danger will befall you, that it is my wish to shelter and protect you, for only the Holy Mother knows the misery I endured, the torture I suffered

when you were in that hole of a fort, when General Santa Anna stormed the Alamo. Now, praise be to the saints, you are safe; and have you no word of thanks to whisper in my ear?"

Excitement such as this was too much for Joséfa's weakened condition, and great tears stole down her cheeks.

"Thanks," she sobbed, "thanks—for what? Shutting me up like a caught rabbit; separating me from Father Clement, the only being on earth whom I love."

"*The only being?*" Castrillo sneered. The strands of jealousy in his cord of love twitched at his heart. He did not know that Joséfa believed Big Terrapin had slain Daubigny, for if he had he would have held his peace. He did not reason that it was impossible for the señorita to have heard of Daubigny's escape from Goliad. He remembered simply that he still had a living rival; and forgetting all else, such was his jealousy he blurted out:

"What of the *Americano*, what of Carlos Daubigny?"

The girl covered her face with her hands and muttered a groan of unutterable anguish. Castrillo's bitter, disappointed love, his old time hardness of heart, his stern cruelty, welled in his breast like a mighty billow, drowning all pity, all mercy.

"Joséfa," he said slowly, "you may as well banish all thought of that *gringo diablo* from your bosom. I am here to speak of his present, of your future. Carlos Daubigny can never fold you to his heart, never return your love; today he is a prisoner at Salado, tomorrow he will be shot."

A faint, stifled scream—and Joséfa fell, a pitiful little heap on the floor. In an instant Castrillo had gathered her in his arms, cursing himself for the brutality of his statement. The Spaniard did not call any one to her aid. It was enough that he held her in his embrace, that he felt her heart flutter like a tired bird, that her head with all its wealth of glossy ringlets rested on his breast. He took her little brown hands and held them gently. The señorita opened her eyes, sighed, and quickly closed them again. Her senses still drowsed, she did not push him from her; she could not see his eyes glowing upon her, possessive as a panther's; she did not feel her cheek brushed by his heavy moustache as his burning lips were pressed against her own.

"Speak, speak, my darling!" he implored. "Tell me that you forgive me; open those pretty black eyes, look at me and see that I did not mean it!"

She stirred restlessly.

"For your sake, darling," he cried, "I will spare him, he shall live, but he can not have you! No, Santa Maria! I love you too much for that." And the man tightened his arms about the limp figure, kissing again and again the pale lips, and whispering words of endearment that fell on empty air.

The swoon did not last much longer. When the señorita regained consciousness, Castrillo was kneeling by her side, having laid her on a rosewood settle in order to aid blood circulation.

"Oh, for Father Clement!" was the burden of her sigh.

"My little one, my *chiquita*, I will send for him, I will liberate Daubigny, I will do anything you may

ask if you will only love me, only promise to marry me!"

Joséfa now sat bolt upright. With the return of consciousness, the return of memory, a new strength seemed to have come to her.

"Love you!" But the ring of disdain in her voice was lost on Castrillo's ear, so wrought up was he with passion.

"Yes, love me! I will woo you patiently; I will *haciendo del oso*; I will walk by your casement and sigh and sigh—if only I may hope that some day you will throw me a token, a little rose, that my sighing has not been in vain. Think, Joséfa, I have riches, I will take you to the City of Mexico; I will heap you with jewels and give you all that gold will buy, if you will only say, 'I, Joséfa, take thee, Juan.'"

"Marry you!" And there was no mistaking the contempt in her voice this time. "Never, never, never! I would sooner be the bride of death!"

Castrillo's face turned livid.

"Then," he hissed between clinched teeth, "Daubigney dies—you yourself have pronounced his sentence; you yourself have sealed his death-warrant."

Joséfa looked at him with a world of reproach in her eyes, then stretched out her arms imploringly, crying:

"Oh! if he yet lives, spare him, spare him!"

"Not unless you promise me I shall have my reward." He spoke fiercely, bitterly, his eyes gleaming like live coals.

"Carlos would not care for his life if I were the ransom, the sacrifice," faltered she.

The Spaniard laughed scornfully.

"Do not fool yourself," he said, "with such flattery. With his life and his looks, the *Americano* would soon find consolation. There are eyes as bright for him in Mexico as yours—but not so with me. There are lips as red that would freely return his kisses, but no lips save yours hold in them any sweetness for me. Look at the efforts I have made to win you; look at the trouble I have taken to plead my cause; and ask yourself if you can doubt my constancy, my devotion, my love?"

"And you, you will be merciful if I agree; you, you will save Carlos's life, you will give him his—freedom?" The words were hard to utter; there was a hard lump in her throat that choked her.

"*Cierto!* I will do more, I will send him back to his native land and pray God to keep him there. I will bring Father Clement to see you—I will offer him my house as a home—only promise to marry me, to be mine, the wife of my bosom!"

The señorita buried her face in her hands, her body quivered with emotion. She felt she would rather steal into the convent chapel and take the veil for life—renouncing Carlos meant giving up the world; he was her world. A nun's bare cell, alone with Daubigny's memory, would be preferable to a palace shared with Castrillo. It was the hardest trial that had ever confronted her—and yet, Daubigny's life, the life of him whom she loved above all else, even more than her own soul, depended upon her answer. How could she refuse? But how could she yield? She looked about her with a wild stare—was there no other way to save

the Virginian? No other possibility that his life might be rescued save by submission to this monster's will? She, Joséfa, stood in the way of Carlos's liberty; her love for him was the barrier to his freedom—and faithfulness to him meant the forfeiture of her own happiness. Would Daubigny ever appreciate the reasons actuating her to accept Castrillo; or would he deem her inconstant, fickle, veered by the winds of chance? His welfare, his freedom, his life were dearer to her than existence; she believed she could die for him; but to live for him, to live for him as Castrillo's wife—that was tenfold harder, ten times more terrible. No greater evidence of love could any love demand than the sacrifice she was contemplating. Joséfa felt herself growing dizzy; her ears seemed full of roaring, the nervous tension was too much; she broke down utterly, her head drooping like a violet on its slender stem. Her body shook with anguish, but her quivering lips emitted no sound of consent.

There was an ominous silence.

Castrillo was pacing the floor nervously. He believed in time she would change and that his passion for her would awaken responsiveness. He tried to curb his feelings and to wait, but the minutes seemed ages. At last he could stand it no longer. He pulled Joséfa's head down on his shoulder and besought her to give him the answer he craved.

"Do not reject my love!" he pleaded. "This passion that almost consumes me will some day find an echo in your heart; for my love for you is bound-

less, immeasurable, and only swear that you will marry me—and I am yours to command, to rule.”

And the señorita, feeling as if a vampire were sucking her heart's blood, sobbingly gasped:

“I—I—will—promise,—but—you —must —keep — your word — about Carlos,—you—must—set—him—free.”

CHAPTER XX

A HEINOUS LOTTERY

The courtyard of the Hacienda of Salado presented a strange scene for Sunday, a day consecrated to rest, to peace. A company of cavalry and infantry were drawn up close to where huddled the remnant of the Mier Expedition, who, silent and depressed, listened to a Mexican officer, Juan Castrillo, who read a message from President Santa Anna, prescribing the punishment to be meted to those that had attempted escape.

It was the refinement of cruelty, the perfection of perfidy, the foulest treachery. A plan that could only have originated in the brain of a demon like Santa Anna, and only been executed in a land infected by the shadow of the Inquisition.

Many of the Texas Rangers could not understand Mexican sufficiently to comprehend the cruelty couched in the verbose message of the tyrant, and so Castrillo, in fiendish derision, commanded a subaltern to hand the paper to Carlos Daubigny, who was ordered to interpret it to his comrades, the *Americanos*.

It was a detestable, a diabolical commission; and Dabney, having understood its purport, and knowing Castrillo's reason for selecting him, cursed the Spaniard to his face.

"No," the Virginian said, "I will not read it, and if my hands were not shackled I would ram Santa Anna's message down your throat!"

A smile satyric and satanic shone on Castrillo's face as he sneered:

"Carlos Daubigney can afford to boast of his prowess, his strength, seeing he will have no opportunity to prove himself a liar."

A look of malignant triumph accompanied these words, and the man licked his tongue against his moustache like a cat might lick its whiskers after a tempting morsel, then continued:

"But the *Americano* should learn of my nation suavity. Such rudeness is not in keeping with the manners of a gentleman, to one who might have proven himself a friend in need, a benefactor. It is within my power to punish you for it, Carlos Daubigney, for insubordination to an officer of Generalissimo Santa Anna is no light offense—and I shall reckon with you by and by; meanwhile the sun dips low, and you can contemplate with the pleasure of anticipation my clemency when you see me discharge my duty to these other rebels, these *gringos*—*Caramba!*"

The Rangers then heard, amid a breathless hush, Castrillo translate into English Santa Anna's decree, ordering that every tenth prisoner be shot. This decimation was to be decided by chance. It was a heinous lottery. A jar with a handkerchief thrown over it was passed to each Texan, who was bidden to draw. It contained one hundred and seventy-six beans, seventeen of which were black. The drawers of the black beans were those doomed

to suffer death for the attempted escape. The others were to be confined in the dungeon of Perote.

The Mexican guards stood ready with fire-locks cocked. The Rangers were placed in a line, and as each man's name was called his handcuffs were unfastened for him to decide his fate.

Pale, but undaunted and fearless, the Texans began to draw. Never had the world witnessed such a lottery!

Some of the Mexicans shut their eyes that they might not see, but the majority bent eagerly forward and looked with the intentness with which they would have witnessed a cock-fight. Castrillo enjoyed the situation. Every now and then he would look at Daubigny and wink significantly, begging him to have patience, assuring him that his time would come soon enough. The other captives, too, felt the sting of Castrillo's baseness. To some he would say blandly:

"Take your leisure, *mi mino*, my child!"

Then to others in the most solicitous tone:

"Be careful, *mi pobrecito*, my poor fellow, for if you draw a black bean it means you will be shot."

All the Mexicans watched anxiously when brave Cameron drew, for earnestly they hoped a black bean would end his fate.

"Dig deep, Capt.!" cried his men, and the Scot's hand came forth clutching a little white bean.

One Ranger, who had been a noted gambler, when the jar was passed to him, exclaimed:

"Boys, 'tis the highest stake I ever played for." And pulling out a black bean, added with a tinge of sadness in his voice, "Just my luck!"

When Wallace's turn came, as his hand corresponded with his foot, it was with difficulty that he squeezed it into the jar. The beans were few now and it was hard to pick up one.

"Don't pull out two," cautioned Castrillo, "for if you do and one is black, you would have to take it, and that, *caramba!* would be unfortunate."

Carefully Big Foot felt the beans his fingers had scraped together, until he selected the smallest bean he could find; it proved to be a white one.

Castrillo had kept score of the black beans that had been drawn and knew only one more remained in the jar.

"There is still another plum in the pot," he said jeeringly, "and now—don't all speak at once—who shall have the first chance at it?"

His keen black eyes glittered like a cougar's as, wandering down the line of Rangers, his gaze fell upon Daubigny. It was the look with which a beast seeks to terrorize, to paralyze its prey; but not a muscle in the Virginian's face quivered—he stood calm, collected, his lips compressed.

"You there, Daubigny, you are a favorite; you might as well have this plum, this prize; yours shall be the privilege of drawing next."

Deep sighs escaped the other prisoners, for the intrepid bravery with which the Virginian not only ignored Castrillo's taunts, but met every danger, inspired in all who knew him the sincerest admiration for his courage.

He stood now with no sign of fear in his steel-blue eyes; and without a flinch of hesitation had his shackles removed.

"Now is the time for us to wipe out old scores!" said the Spaniard. Then, noting the man's manner, exclaimed: "Santissima Virgen! you must have a good conscience to stare death in the face like that. No, it will hurt you more to live than to die when you know a little secret I shall tell you later on; step back, and let Patrick Jack take your place.

This irregularity of procedure confused the corporal, who, hastening to unfasten the Irishman's cuffs, did not notice that the Virginian had stepped back into line with his hands still free, for Patrick Jack riveted every one's attention on himself. His wrathful indignation contrasted strangely with Daubigney's calmness.

"Och! It's fer murdherin' mesilf that ye be, ye bloody spalpeen! wid'out jidge or jury. Oi see thot as plain as th' nose on yer mugs, yer ugly nagers. 'Tis thot ye are thryin' to do. Ye sint me to pr-rison an' me frinds got me out, but if ye sind me to be shot Oi'll nivver git over it; no, not while Oi live. Begorrah! 'tain't fair; 'tis th' damndest wurruk of haythen intoirely, decavin' an' innocen' ma-an to his desthruccion. Faith! an' besides yer don't gin me a fair chanct, fer awll th' be-ans are picked over, wid no choice left at awll, at awll. It is not roight—but what do yer cowl'd hearts know of roight, ye blood-thir-risty nagers. Divvil take sich a lot-ther-ry says Oi!"

Though the Mexicans could not understand his drollery, his facial expression amused them, so that his remonstrances were indulged.

"Arrah me honeys!" Jack continued, "Oi hev a good mind not to put me han' near that damn jar,

but afther awll it's a lot-ther-ry an' 'tis no more loikely that Patr-rick Jack will dhraw a black be-an than that th' Ould Boy wud cross himsilf wid holy water—so here goes."

When a shriveled white bean was produced, the shout: "Erin go bragh! Hooray fer ould Oireland! Hooray fer Saint Patr-rick!" accompanied it, drowning the congratulations of his Ranger friends. While the Irishman eyed the bean as if it were the Kohinoor, he added:

"'Tis betther to be a lucky fool than a dead hero, Oi'm a thinkin', fer me poor human fingers picked a black be-an but Oi had prayed to th' good Saint Patr-rick, an' th' darlin' changed it to a whoite wan—'twas a mir-raculous mir-racle what saved me, nawthin' shor-rt av a mir-racle."

The lottery now soon ended.

Castrillo put the seventeen black beans in his vest pocket, then ordered the soldiers to blindfold the victims. When this was done the little band of patriots were marched out into the open field and—shot.

The Rangers left behind could hear the signal taps of the drums, the quick burst of discharge, the groans of anguish. It was the work of a minute—but it stained Mexico's honor forever.

The profile of the mountains was silhouetted against the sky. The sun, like a wound in the side of heaven, weltered the sky with its gore; and overspreading the short twilight stole a dull, ashen hue—then the light of the day went out, the shadows widened, deepened, darkened; for a moment the

wind blew chill as if nipped by the frost of Death; then all was still—like rest eternal.

Many was the tear that stole down rough cheeks when the captives, crushed and bitter, were returned to their prison. Horror-stricken and desperate, they thought of the day's work and wondered what the morrow would bring. They were to be taken to Perote, the strongest dungeons in all Mexico, far from all help, all succor, all deliverance. Some of the Rangers had heard of this Perote, this stronghold, this fortress, with its foul atmosphere and massive walls, verily a living tomb.

As night deepened, depression increased. None of the Rangers talked—their pitiful whispered conjectures ceased; there was no word of comfort to be spoken—they were all weary, heart-broken, miserable, desperate.

The seconds crept by at a tortoise speed. Without, in the corridor, could be heard the heavy, slow, uniform tramp of the Mexican guard, who every fifteen minutes cried, "*Centinela alerta!*" but it seemed years, decades, aeons between his call, for silence brooded like a vampire on the damp, chill prison air. The place seemed alive with insects; rats also skurried across the mouldy floor as if pursued by some phantom of fear; while huge bats, spying the feeble flicker of a gibbous moon, struck their wings against the iron gratings of the windows.

There was a murmurous stir among the Rangers as they heard the bolts of the ponderous door being slowly withdrawn. The rusty hinges creaked, while the light from the corridor dimly pervaded the cling-

ing gloom as a sergeant entered with clanking sword and in broken English, impossible to repeat, summoned Carlos Daubigney to come with him.

Quick as a flash Patrick Jack sprang to his feet and asked:

"Ar-re ye shure he's th' ma-an ye want."

The Mexican replied in the affirmative, adding:

"*Cierto!* the *gringo* that didn't draw a white bean."

"Now, Oi see fer mesilf," said Jack, "that ye ar-re not shure afther awll—ye don't know what yer dhrivin at; fer was it th' ma-an that didn't draw a be-an or was it th' sojer that vowed by awll th' saints he wud nivver draw a black wan?"

The Mexican, who was a dullard, better suited to work in the mines of Zacatecas than to fill a sergeant's place, seemed puzzled; and Patrick, with an Irishman's intuition, quickly grasped this pretext like a drowning man a straw.

"No, begorrah! Oi nivver saw sich a nager as ye, ye spalpeen! 'Tis a sutler ye ar-re fitted to be, not a serjint, fer ye don't know yer own biziniss an' 'tis Oi that have to tell ye; it may as loike be mesilf ye ar-re wantin', or, me honey, it may be Dar-rbeny. Shure, if ye shud take us both along, so as to not make a mishtake, it will be awll roight. It's like th' mimor-ry an' th' forgitfulniss, ye must have 'em both in yer hear-rt to be a throe success."

And as the Irishman arose he whispered to the Virginian:

"Lave me to dale wid him; an' feel aisy, but whatever ye do, hold yer hands loike they was thied;

that's whoi Oi be stickin' by ye, my darlin', closter than a brother."

The two Rangers were soon ushered into the presence of Juan Castrillo. He sat in a small room alone. His sword, out of the scabbard, lay on the table before him, the jewels in the silver hilt glittering in the candlelight. A carafe partly filled with *pulque* and a wine bottle, nearly empty, also sat on the table, close to two glasses. It was plain both Castrillo and the sergeant had been drinking heavily, but the intoxicant effected them differently. The Mexican's brain was bemuddled, while Castrillo's, accustomed to strong stimulants, was brighter, more brilliant than usual. His manner, ever mendacious, was more vainglorious, cunning and covinous than it had been in the courtyard.

"It is Señor Carlos Daubigney, is it not?" he said, bowing in mock solemnity.

"An', yer honor, Patr-rick Jack, too," announced the Irishman, whose bow in return equalled that of a clown in a circus ring.

"And, *diablo!* who summoned you?" asked Castrillo haughtily.

But the son of Erin was incorrigible, and quick came the reply:

"Me own best friend—me mother Wit; seein' yer serjint in that respect was a helpless or-rphin."

Castrillo laughed, and Patrick, taking advantage of his humor, added, nodding to the table:

"Oi says to mesilf, 'Shure, if th' Mexican Gin'ral is dacent 'nough to send fer Dar-rbeny to dhrink wid him a tippler, shure, Oi'm a pathrite too, an' th' more th' mer-rier, as th' ould sayin' goes; fer

water an' prison fare may make a sthrong, a glorious app-eal to th' mind, but nivver to th' stomach; it is aven worse than a relijous fast, it desthroys th' cour-ridge of th' bravest throops.' Water may be awll roight on th' outside, but on th' inside—nivver! an' so if Oi'm to ner-rve mesilf fer a long mar-rch ter-morrow, a wee dr-rap o' dram wud give strength to me legs, an'—"

"Shut up!" said Castrillo; then laughingly added: "Sergeant, fill that *gringo's* mouth with pulque, so he can't talk."

"An illegant gin'ral ye be, entoirely, entoirely; an' ye will foind that Patr-rick Jack can presarve a silence now, aqual to th' dead."

Turning to Dabney, the Spaniard continued:

"I have a treat in store for you also—a favor to bestow; and a favor from an enemy, señor, to a proud, arrogant spirit, such as you showed yourself today, will be like a pebble in the shoe, a splinter in the heel. I have sent for you to tell you that you are no longer under a ban—the ban of love at least; that there you are free; for with Joséfa a stronger tie has been forged."

The Spaniard eyed the Virginian keenly, maliciously, and though his moustache was heavy, it did not conceal the cruel lines about his mouth, for Castrillo was snarling, not smiling, as he supposed. He knew his slightest reference to Joséfa, like champagne froth, would make Dabney drunk with rage, and so his plan was to torture him.

"For the sake of Joséfa Urrea, my—promised—wife—" Castrillo spoke slowly, deliberately, and

now paused for a moment to note the effect his words produced.

The blood leaped darkly to Dabney's cheek; rage and turmoil made him quiver like an aspen leaf, so that the Spaniard gloated in the exaltation of his malevolence, as he repeated:

"For the sake of Joséfa Urrea, *my promised wife*, I have given my word as a Mexican patriot that you shall not share the fate of the other Rangers."

Again there was a pause—a terrible pause.

Daubigney bit his lips to silence the denial, the curse that sprang to them, for no good could come from contradicting this scoundrel. Castrillo, disappointed that his sallies met with no retort, began to think that the Virginian did not take him in earnest.

"The señor," he sneered, "is pleased to disbelieve me; to think it is a fabrication; to comfort his heart with the memory of the little señorita that fancied she cared for him because she did not know what love really was—until I taught her."

Never before in his whole life had Daubigney occasion to practice such self-control. His hands were free, his fingers itching to clasp themselves around Castrillo's throat and choke the lie out of him along with his life—but the noise of such a struggle, for the Spaniard was compactly and wirily built, would quickly have brought the sentinel from the corridor, even if the sergeant did not finish the fray with a shot from his musket. So in a voice restrained and impressive the Virginian asked:

"Why do you waste time in telling me this; for naught that you or any one might say would ever shake my faith in Joséfa's loyalty."

The assurance with which Daubigney spoke, together with Castrillo's memory of the condition under which Joséfa had yielded to his suit, aroused the venom in his breast, so that his black eyes gleamed like a cobra's when he raises his crest to strike.

"*Caramba!*" he hissed, "my lips can still taste the sweetness of her mouth, my arms can still feel the pressure of her quivering breast as she nestled in them—for I am just from Monterey, where my *chiquita* is waiting to be wedded."

With an ill-concealed joy, Castrillo observed that despite Daubigney's plastic calm his breath came hard and labored. Continuing, he said:

"Joséfa's gentle nature, that would not tread on even a worm, pleaded with me for the sake of your friendship with the Priest, that you should not be imprisoned or shot—and so, to humor her whim, I promised; but a promise to a woman is subject to man's discretion to fulfil as he deems best. An obstinate, persistent nature seems to characterize you, Señor Daubigney, and it will not therefore be difficult to convert you into a mule. In the future you will haul dirt, hitched to a cart, you understand, and your prowess, your boasted strength shall have ample means for exercise in helping thus to make the road to Santa Anna's palace. And if on our drives my wife should chance to see you and query as to what you are, I shall tell her God perchance in-

tended it for a man, but that the poor creature has made an ass of himself for life."

The Virginian's face was white as marble; the the paroxysm of blood-heat had passed away; for out of the degradation of Castrillo's insult rose the phoenix of hope—he might yet escape, he might yet claim Joséfa, he might yet overcome; and thinking thus, he mumbled half audibly:

"The jawbone of an ass once wrought destruction to a hostile horde." But his hearers did not understand this reference.

The sergeant was then ordered to take the captives from the room.

"But don't put them with the other prisoners," cautioned Castrillo;" put them in the *calaboza*, the guardhouse, for it would not suit me to have them escape." And, satisfied with his revenge, the Spaniard gulped down a glass of wine as Daubigny and Jack were marched away.

Now while Castrillo had been venting his spleen, the sergeant had been satisfying his thirst with *pulque*, so, though he was not yet drunk in his legs, he was in his brain. And instead of conveying his prisoners to the guardhouse he opened the wrong door and put them in a shed-room of the Hacienda. There he left them, believing, with a drunken man's confidence, that all was right. Hardly had the door closed after him before Jack whispered:

"Faith, Dar-rbeny, th' iny'brite fool is as full of misthakes as praties in a hill; an' Oi relish 'em much aloike. An' now Oi'm got an ijee in my head that's took root as a seed shud, an' since th' soil seems to be fertile, Oi see no raison whoi it shu'dn't

blossom this ver-ry night. Oi'm fer makin' me escape. 'Tis noble to doie loike a pathrite, but 'tis bettther to live fer yer counthry! What say ye, Dar-rbeny? That's a sthrong an' sthraight ar-rjimint an' wud convince a whole coort as tistimony—but Patr-rick Jack ain't tur-rnin' spaker; shure, tho' Oi'm fer tur-rnin' mole an' scr-ratchin' dir-rt f'r me loife."

Dabney was silent, busy with his thoughts.

"What say ye? Come, me darlint, cheer up an' have done wid yer foolin'. Ye needn't mind Patr-rick Jack knowin' yer saycret. A blind field-marshal wud have knowed it widout th' help of a spoy-glass. It's about yer swatehear-rt Oi'm a meanin'—th' little Mexican. Faith! Oi was goin' to say, but Oi will not thread on yer bunion, Oi will spare yer feelin's; howsomiver, mesilf wud have wished she was whoite, wid a purty blue oye—but it ain't Patr-rick that has got to look in it f'r th' rest av his loife, it's Dar-rbeny that's got to be plased annyhow. An' fer that matther, Deaf Smith married a punkin face an' Jim Bowie too, an' it nivver hinder'd 'em fr'm gr-rowin' illusthr-rous—fer a woife ofthener makes a ma-an than mars him, Oi'm belavin', jidgin' by sich livin' evidince as haythen bachelor-rs. So whin it comes to mathrimony, Oi says, says Oi to mesilf, each to his loikin', an' me own loikin' is to r-remain single ivry toime; that's a sure way not to make a misthake, Dar-rbeny. But don't let me dampen yer sperits, fer Oi'm a wishin' ye good luck jist th' same, an' th' smoile av th' saints; an' may Patr-rick, dhressed in his rigimintals, be pr-resent to dance at th' cirimony—but howsomiver purty an'

attractive a woman may be, she can't have a weddin' widout a bridegroom annywhere than a wake widout a corpse; so Oi'm fer gettin' yer away, along wid mesilf, an' that in a hurry, this very minyit."

While the Irishman had been talking, Daubigny had been examining the wall.

"Pat," he said, "this is not adobe, it's wood, and not tightly built at that."

"A blessin' on th' head av sich a builder, says Oi; an' here's me pr-rayer that his sowl may nivver flound in pur-rgithory; but come, ma-an, unless yer be wantin' to go thar yersilf, an' unthoie me hands. Oi have alr-rhedy spat in 'em, an' they're ready fer wurruk."

It was not long before the captives succeeded in making an opening sufficiently large for them to squeeze through, for the timber, old and rotten, easily gave to the force brought to bear upon it.

"Faith!" puffed Jack, taking a long breath of the night's air, "if th' bloody spalpheens had kept me shut up much longer, a starvin' th' meat off me bones an' the stren'th out av me muscle, sure Oi wud have made me escape thro' the kayhole, an' that widout a pinch; but Gawd be praised! we are free widout bein' beholdin' to sich murdherin' vil-lyuns!"

The sky was gray with starlight, but in the courtyard the shadows of the walls of the Hacienda made a darkness grateful to the fugitives, who carefully groped their way toward the gate. Charles Dabney was in the lead, holding in his hand a formidable cudgel, a piece of plank rent from the side of the

shed through which they had passed. Soon the indistinct outlines of the weary sentinel's figure, catching a wink of rest, met their gaze. The Virginian, coming upon him first, gave him a lick on the head that put him to sleep forever, that felled him to earth, dead as a nine-pin. Patrick Jack picked up the *escoepta* that dropped from the lifeless hand, and Dabney, stooping down, undid his sword and appropriated it for his own use; and thus armed, the Rangers, with renewed caution, sought the stable. It was but the work of a moment, as they met with no opposition, to saddle two horses and steal out into the night. Leading his animal through the courtyard, Dabney stopped at the gate and picked up the limp body of the sentinel and threw it over his pommel, saying:

"A dead man might tell a tale here, but nobody will find him down in the cañon."

"Roight ye be, me darlin', fer it will give th' bloody nagers somethin' to think on to thrack him, an' thin we'll be over th' hills an' far away, Oi am ahopin'; an' so long as ye totes th' gr-ruesome thing, mesilf is not goin' to object, f'r 'tain't to Patr-rick's taste to be huggin' a loive Gr-reaser, much less a dead wan; but ye're differ-rent." The Irishman laughed in a low way, and then added:

"But, Dar-rbeny, didn't ye nivver hear-r how that two was a compiny an' thr-ree was a cr-rowd? A graveyar-rd full cud be no wor-rse, an' Oi'll not enjoy me ride nor fale aisy entoirely till yer thr-row him away, the car-rion."

CHAPTER XXI

THE SEARCH

The escaping prisoners' nerves were stretched to the tension of frenzy as they again found themselves free from the confines of the Hacienda of Salado. Would they be able to get away successfully this time, or would failure confront them as it had done before? The mere thought of what recapture would mean, the possibility that the Mexicans might catch them, made them desperate in their anxiety, their haste.

The night had become blacker, but the horses in their instinct kept the road with little deviation, and neck and neck Charles Dabney and Patrick Jack went for an hour or more before drawing rein to give their mounts a breathing spell; then on they spurred again, their horses responding gamely with a tremendous burst of speed. The road was hard and even and they thundered on in a steady lope. Neither Dabney nor Jack spoke a word; it was no time to talk, and the puffing of their steeds and the rattle of hoofs was the only sound audible. The Rangers, not conscious of cruelty, flogged their horses relentlessly, knowing only that on their swiftness depended salvation.

The way, the old Saltillo Road, twisted like a contortionist in making its steep descent down the mountain. The passage became less wide, more serpentine as it narrowed and zigzagged into little more than a bridle path. It now became necessary, imperative, for the riders to proceed more cautiously, slower, and in single file; but so great a distance had been covered that there was no longer the fear of immediate pursuit, of capture—though, like the sword of Damocles, this danger still hung over their heads.

Snake-like the trail crawled along, then debouched upon a plateau that crested in a long ridge before slipping into the valley. Better time was again possible, and the Texans in their eagerness pushed on at full speed. Misgivings and doubts disappeared with their progress as night birds vanish with the approach of dawn.

The blood sang in Daubigny's veins.

The morning broke, roseate with mellow tints; long lines of amber and streaks of pink and gray shone in the east; then, like a blaze of glory, the sun sprang high in the heavens. Dabney dashed on, his brows knit, his teeth compressed, and close in his wake followed Jack, bright and irrepressible as usual.

"Look at Dar-rbeny," he mumbled to himself, "he's th' verry pictchure of mis'ry—an' awll fer a woman. It's of hersilf he's athinkin' an' it kapes him fr'm feelin' cheer-rful, so no swatehear-rt fer mesilf, says Oi, fer Patr-rick Jack wud r-ruther have a flea in his shir-rt than a woman in his mind; an' if yer can kape famales out of yer mind, they can

nivver hop into yer hear-rt; shure, an' that's sthraight."

The Rangers were now emerging from a narrow defile, and an abrupt turn brought them face to face with two men whose proximity had been sheltered by a precipitous cliff. Men, though, such as these, inspired in the Texans' hearts no fear, for they were friars—harmless mendicants, old and travel-stained, probably journeying to Monterey to take the Blessed Sacrament with their brothers of the order of St. Francis. But neither their age nor their cloth saved them, for escaping prisoners cannot parley with politeness when opportunity beckons the way. In less time than it takes to tell, these holy men had the chance offered them to practice that divine rule which is the hardest, the severest test of obedience, "Doing unto others as you would they should do unto you." The requirement in this case was simple, involving only the inconvenience of a change of toilet; and the friars, though at heart rebellious, meekly acquiesced to wills stronger than their own. The Rangers thus became friars and the churchmen heretic *gringos*.

The Irishman, watching the Spaniards dressing themselves in his and Dabney's much-worn frontier suits, could not suppress a laugh and could not resist a jest.

"Faith, ye little suspect'd when ye set out on this joorney that ye wud mate a mir-racle face to face, that ye wud start out a monk an' end up a monkey; but Oi mesilf am no ither than Patr-rick, an' loike me illusthr-rous namesake, th' blessed Saint, Oi hev th' power of changin' a Mexican sarpint fr'm a

pizenous reptile into lookin' loike a dacent gentleman-an, begor-rah!"

Then turning to the Virginian, he added:

"Now, Fr-ray Dar-rbeny, come on; Oi mesilf fale loike Brother Jackass wid these petticoats danglin' r-round me shanks."

And so saying, he swung himself into the saddle. The horses were now allowed a more leisurely pace than had hitherto marked their journey, for the probability of their recapture had dwindled into a vague speculation. Friars were plentiful in Mexico, and so they excited no suspicion, for Charles Dabney spoke Mexican like a native, and the cowl pulled over his forehead shielded not only his gray-blue eyes, but completely hid the gold light in his hair. The country was also infested by brigands, and so the Rangers little dreaded that their indignity to the friars would meet with any special notice or interfere with their escape.

Joséfa was in Monterey—and to Monterey Daubigny hastened.

He threaded all the old narrow by-ways, looking for her in vain. He lingered in the plaza, close by the great dolphin fountain, but though many black eyes peeped at him from their *rebozas*, none were Joséfa's. He visited the *plazuelas*, lovely in their flowers, fountains, and foliage, but no trace of her was to be seen. The old marketplace, with its rabble, its *leperos*, its cigarette-smoking *mozos*, also became familiar to him. There he watched everything, from the ox teams and small Spanish mules standing by, to the poorest beggars, imploring in

piteous tones for the gift of a *peseta*. But in all the moving multitude of queer costumes, of water-carriers and vendors of *dulces* and *tortillas*, and natives picturesque in *serape*, in none of the swarthy, straight-haired throng was Joséfa. The Virginian paced the drives frequented by the rich, the aristocracy; finally his beat included all of Monterey, and he was as regular at his duty as the old *serenos*, the night watchmen.

Finding her began to seem, however, a futile undertaking. No trace, no clue had he yet discovered, and Daubigny, knowing the success of his ever doing so depended on the secrecy of his quest, dared not ask any one questions, though the silence was intolerable. He prayed for inspiration to aid him in ferreting out her lodgings.

Day after day he sought her, and night after night he dreamed that he found her—and yet it seemed a dream likely never to be realized, never to be verified. Then his dumb sorrow, his passion, his disappointment, like leeches, began to bleed his belief in Joséfa's constancy, making his temples throb with anguish as doubts sucked out his heart's blood. The words of Castrillo, that he had put from him as flagrant falsehood, now flayed his breast with questioning. Had Joséfa, after all, forsaken him? Had she accepted his great devotion to cast it aside as worthless? Had she shattered his trust and her promises? Was it her purpose to marry the Spaniard? Daubigny's thoughts could not go beyond this without experiencing the tortures of hell. He could not contain himself. He could not remain quiescent, passive; his temperament demanded ac-

tion, action, action. But jealousy could not corrode affection such as the Virginian's for Joséfa—his misgivings were momentary, fleeting; his fidelity steadfast, eternal.

Hope, like a will-o-the-wisp dancing in the mist of memory, beckoned him to keep on trying, to persevere, never to relinquish—and so Daubigny went forth to search anew; though he felt that Monterey had become the mirage of his heart's desire, his longings.

The sun, like a ball of fire, lit up the horizon, melting the broken mountain outline into a sky of molten copper, as Charles Dabney, with heavy tread, retraced his way from the *ojo de agua*, the great spring, with its crystal waters bubbling from a nest of white pebbles, a spot picturesque in beauty, and ever a favorite gathering place for women—but his Joséfa, his Evangeline, was not among them. The Virginian plodded slowly on, passing the Barracks of the Alameda. Failure, despondency clogged his movements, and the heaviness that was in his heart made the heaviness that was in his step, for melancholy had weighted, crushed out all alacrity.

Like a blind man he followed the road by the Bishop's Palace, until it merged into the street where, nearby, rises the Convent of the Capuchinas.

The evening was still; the tranquillity, the repose, the peace of the night seemed hovering over Monterey, and on this breathless hush, this calm, there floated, like the warble of a weary bird, a hymn, the words of which were lost before reaching the Virginian's ear. But the tune in its pathos and misery was in unison with his feelings and touched him

deeply, so that he followed the sound, faint though it was, so faint indeed that had not his ears been acutely strung by watchfulness he would scarcely have heard it at all. Silver clear the notes now came to him, stirring his soul with a rapturous thrill, making his heart keep time with every cadence of the singer's voice, for Carlos Daubigny had recognized it as the voice of Joséfa.

The lover was held spell-bound neath the window whence the sound emanated. There he stood, leaning against a great pecan that grew so close to the convent wall that, had not the holy sisters grown to love it and begged for its existence, the tree would long since have been cut away. Enraptured, Daubigny listened :

“ ‘Ave Maria—Maiden mild,
Ah listen to a maiden's prayer;
'Tis thou can hear though from the wild,
'Tis thou can save amid despair;
Safe may we sleep until the morrow,
Though banished, outcast and reviled,
O Maiden, see a maiden's sorrow;
O Mother, hear a suppliant child!’ ”

The Virginian had often heard Father Clement and Joséfa sing it together. The words were familiar to him, and so in his full-volumed, rich bass he joined in :

“ ‘*Ave Maria—Sancta Maria—Sancta Maria!*’ ”

Joséfa instantly stopped—listened—she had heard, but had she heard aright, or was it the trick of imagination, of fancy?

It seemed a harmony from heaven, melodious as the seraph's song; and yet, ringing in the señorita's ears, like the peal of some mighty orchestra, was the dirge, "*Love—Renunciation—Love* — RENUNCIATION—RENUNCIATION," drowning all hope with its discord.

Joséfa had wept for Daubigney until her tears were dry; she had lamented him until there were no words to express her grief, and instead of the orange blossoms she had craved as Carlos's bride, was the crown of thorns that her promise to Castrillo pressed to her brow. Never was woman more utterly, more totally miserable than she, for those who love most, endure most, suffer most—and so it was with her. The girl's thin little hand went to her head to still its throbbing as she listened again—yes, it was the music of her beloved's voice, Daubigney's voice, singing the Ave Maria. Joséfa leaned far out of the window, scanning the deserted street. Not a soul seemed astir, save a Mexican, dressed as the average citizen of Monterey dresses, in a close-fitting jacket, pantaloons of a dark color ornamented with steel buttons, and a loose scarf. He was moving quietly on toward the Bishop's Palace, and though an embroidered sombrero rested jauntily on his black head, there was little else about him suggestive of a troubadour; besides, he was small, a mere dwarf compared with Daubigney. The dumb cry of disappointment welled in her heart like a foamless wave on the deep sea of her loneliness. But as her head dropped in sorrow her gaze fell on a most surprising sight, for in the shadow of the great pecan stood a friar apparently kissing his hand to her. Joséfa could

not believe her eyes—and yet, there he was, throwing a *beso soplado* at her, kissing all the finger-tips of his right hand and blowing them in the air, straight toward her casement. Then the truth flashed upon her, and a laugh clear as a bell sounded on the twilight's stillness as she saw the friar's face, for Daubigny had pushed the cowl back from his forehead, so that the last rays of the fading sun touched his hair as with a caress, showing therein the threads of gold. In the amber of the eventide Joséfa saw him—saw him more manly in mien; more heroic in beauty; more like a sculptured god—the Apollo Belvedere—than he had ever seemed before. It was rapture exquisite! joy inconceivable! bliss divine! With face flushed and radiant, and with voice a-tremor, she cried:

“Carlos, Carlos, my Carlos!”

Then, so tense was her excitement, words failed her, for breathing became a difficulty, an effort; but at last she gasped:

“In the name of Heaven, how came you here?”

With Daubigny, too, the delirium of joy was almost overpowering; but with the strength of a strong man he mastered himself, and motioned her to be still. In the language of signs, he bade her stay where she was, to watch and wait until he could return and rescue her. Then, with the energy of a great hope long deferred, but now a blessed assurance, the Virginian turned, and with rapid strides made his way to where he knew Patrick Jack would be awaiting him. Joséfa watched him with curious, speculative, longing eyes until he disappeared from view; then she bowed her head and

prayed to the Blessed Virgin that his plan might prove successful, that he might grasp her from Castriello's clutch. Her confidence in Daubigney made her sanguine that all would now end right; and, girl-like, the romance of the situation began to appeal to her, as with nerves a-tingle and throbbing heart she eagerly awaited the return of her lover.

It was not long before the friars hove in sight.

With an Irishman's readiness, Jack's intuition had quickly seized on the details of a scheme that he believed would work well, and in the sleeve of his cassock rested a suspicious bundle. Darkness, also, like an accomplished operator, had come to their assistance; and so when the vesper bells were ringing, and the nuns had repaired to the chapel, and the convent was deserted, Daubigney climbed the great pecan tree and lifted Joséfa from her window, with all the joyful eagerness of a boy robbing a bird's nest. He had felt the agony of loss—and now he experienced the ecstasy of possession. Joséfa's arms were clasped about his neck, and in that perfect bliss—all the privations, all the horrors, all the misery of the past were forgotten.

When they safely reached the ground, Patrick bowed with great dignity—a dignity well befitting his cloth, as he said:

"Here Oi be waitin', a dacint praste, awll ready to offer me sarvices; awll ready to tie th' knot wid th' cerimony; an' th' sole pay Oi be askin' fer me trouble will be a kiss fr'm th' br-ride, begorrah!"

Daubigney smiled, and the Irishman, with a grin, continued:

"Now, little gal, yer swatehear-rt an' mesilf be two dacent fr-riars; an' 't wuddent help th' good reptation we ar-re winnin' fer th' monasthir-ry of Saint Fr-rancis to have a pur-ty miss loike yersilf along in our-r compiny. There is nawthin' fer ye to do but gine th' rijimint; fer fr'm toime immemorial Oi hev hear-r say, 'Whin in Gr-reece be gr-reasy,' an' so says Oi, 'Whin in Mexico, do as th' damndest Spanyol-rds.' 'Tis a land flowin' wid hypocrates an' scoundhrels, as plentiful as *frijoles* an' fr-riars—an' they is all mixted together in a verry divvel's br-roth. So, me darlint, take th' advice of a Oir-rishma-an, plain, common sinse tho' it be, an' mesilf that's spakin' it; don't nivver be a bell-wether-r, fer 'tis to be lonesome; but go wid th' cr-rowd ivry toime, an' thin if th' er dhrinks, 'tis others sets 'em up. Now Oi hev br-rought yer th' togs that will make iven a reptile leopard-rd change his whiskers.

Jack then undid the bundle that all this time he had kept close in his arm, and it was with no small degree of pride that a monk's garb was displayed.

"Now hur-ry, me darlint," he cautioned; "don't, for th' love of Gawd, be wastin' pr-recious minyits puttin' 'em on; fer th' is no nade to pr-rimp, seein' yer hev caught yer swatehear-rt shure, loike a floi in molasses."

Then with a gesture that held within it a world of explanation, Jack turned to Dabney, adding:

'Twas only this marnin' Oi help'd mesilf to 'em; fer Oi says, says Oi, 'Wan nivver can tell what a day may br-ring upon yer head till th' noight foinds yer cowl'd.' An' whin Oi larn'd yer plan to riscue

th' darlint Oi says to me conscience, yer naden't confiss to th' praste yer st'alín', fer th' necissity av th' case will gin yer absolutun; fer Oi'm not a thafe, Dar-rbeny, but a pr-rovident ma-an, a ma-an wid an insoight, wid a oye always r-ready fer th' fhutur-re. Besoides, shure th' people will 'xpict yer to clothe yer woife annyhow whin yer have mar-ried her; but so long as th' cirimony, much less th' banns, hevn't been publish'd, Pat can show her th' cour-rtisy av supplyin' her wid a dhress; fer it's me privilege as th' best frind av her swatehear-rt—it's yesilf Oi'm meanin'."

Then, calling to Joséfa, he added:

"Faith, ye must hurry, me honey, fer it's fer gittin' away entoirely that Oi'm afther, fer th' will loikely be a purshuit, tho' Oi don't mane ter froighten th' darlint."

It was thus that as the night wore on and a lurid moon stole out from the foggy sky, three friars turned their backs on the old city of Monterey, bound for Texas.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SERPENT AND THE CHARMER.

When the bugle-call echoes through the land, great actions, momentous movements crowd upon each other's heels, so that the event of yesterday becomes the forecast of the morrow.

One more deal in the game he was playing so successfully—thought Santa Anna to himself—and the stakes would all be his. And so it was in his chastisement of the rebel Texans he forgot that the last deal is the decisive one—he forgot everything in his eagerness, his overweening vanity, his confidence in himself—yes, he even forgot his generalship.

Cautiously and subtly Sam Houston fell back before him, his retreat covering the flight of hundreds of helpless American women and children. But when the army of Texas went into camp near the mouth of the San Jacinto River the gravest doubts as to the wisdom of such a move pervaded the breast of his soldiers. The charmer, though, had never charmed the serpent so wisely; for Santa Anna, believing the Texans caught, followed close upon their tracks, little suspecting that his so doing had been anticipated with the keenest desire by the strategist Houston, whose three years spent among the Chero-

kees had acquainted him with a cunning capable of coping with even the Dictator of Mexico.

Santa Anna had been cautioned by his generals to be alert, vigilant, wary. Castrillo had made bold to tell him:

"Sir, you little know these Texans yet! They may be betrayed into capitulation or overwhelmed by numbers; but mark my words, when we meet them in open field, unless your force is well supported, you must need look to your bay leaves."

But the warning fell on deaf ears; the tyrant had become venturesome, careless. Leaving the main division of his army on the Brazos, Santa Anna pursued Sam Houston, believing he had him now entrapped.

The San Jacinto low-lands are lavishly, gorgeously adorned by Nature. The breezes from the Gulf mingle the invigorating smell of salt air with the breath of myriads of flowers strewing the prairie. The camp-ground seemed like a summer-garden; with a perfume honeyed, saccharine, melliferous—such as paradise might have exhaled.

Blending with the murmur of wave and the sigh of the wind was the cry of the water-fowl; for ducks, coots, and pelicans dotted the lagoon, while from the wealth of nearby rushes hurtled the flaming flamingo.

The site, though, was surely a strange one to select for a battlefield, one fraught with every natural disadvantage; but necessity made it exigent, for Houston's only hope lay in striking the enemy a blow at an unexpected moment, in an unexpected place. The barriers hedging in the contending

armies were the long edge of timber skirting the coast, the blue sheet of the San Jacinto Bay, and the turbid waters of the Buffalo Bayou rolling on to the Galveston Gulf.

"Boys," said Sam Houston to his men, "before many hours we'll have one of the bloodiest fights ever fought; and my plan is to have the bridge over the Bayou burnt, so as to impede the advance of Mexican reinforcements and cut off all chance of escape. We are willing to fight to the finish, and the sanctity of our cause will give us the victory. Now who can be trusted to burn the bridge?"

All eyes instantly turned to Deaf Smith, who proved always worthy of difficult undertakings. The soldiers had not forgotten his shrewdness as a spy—his cool-headed secretiveness that ever won success.

The Indian-hunter, usually taciturn from having spent his life mostly in the great silence of Nature's heart, now chuckled at this commission, saying to himself:

"Yip, the snake's got to be scotch'd, so ole Hous' can kill him!"

"You better not go alone," cautioned Houston, "for the Mexicans might cut you off so you would never reach it, and that bridge has got to be burnt if it takes my whole army to do it. Take some of the boys with you."

So as aids, Smith carefully selected a party of frontier friends, and together they set out on this hazardous enterprise. No wonder Houston felt anxious in detailing these men for this service, for that bridge spanned more than a mere bayou, it con-

nected Texas' liberty with Mexico's tyranny. It held evenly balanced freedom and peonage, and on Deaf Smith's shoulders rested the responsibility of turning the scale for success or failure.

Watching the men preparing to start, Henry Karnes said:

"Better hurry, 'fore Santy Anny 'spects this here's gwine ter prove a trap; 'cause varmints like him is natur'ly s'picious; and I hopes not only ter ketch him but ter soak my knife in his jugular or skin him like a skunk. When ye gits back none of ye mouths shall be a-waterin' fer a chaw of 'bacco from my twist; but mind ye—bait the trap well!"

In the course of several hours Deaf Smith returned, with the joyful news that his flint had fired the bridge.

"But that ain't all," he laughed; "we done ketch'd some game a-ready—curious lookin' critters they be. At first we thought they was Mexican pole-cats, jedgin' by thar looks; but they's jist plain tame home-cats, and good mousers, too." He threw back his head in a loud guffaw, and, pointing toward the bayou, said, "Thar they be now, will you please to look."

"Lord bless my soul!" exclaimed Karnes, "if they ain't friars. Go fetch th' ole Priest, fer surely this army ain't a lackin' fer chaplains."

The surprise, the delight, the pathos that followed had best be left to the imagination, for it was too sacred for words to describe—this meeting of Father Clement with Joséfa and Daubigney; and Jack was there also, his eyes glistening with sym-

pathetic tears as he witnessed this affecting scene. The Priest's old face shone with a heavenly glow as in scriptural language he framed his welcome :

"My children," said he, "that were lost, are found. God has been merciful in permitting my eyes to see them again, well and alive—for I was bereaved, bereaved!"

Father Clement wept aloud—tears of joy, tears of relief; and Joséfa, burying her head on his breast, clung to him, mingling her thankfulness with his, in that demonstrative effusiveness characteristic of Latin blood. The Virginian, though thoroughly in sympathy with their feelings, was not, however, of the same temperament; and so he sought to hide the fulness of his heart by turning the tide of emotion into the channel of mirth.

"*Monsieur le curé*," he said, "I had never expected to have found you here, in an army of English-speaking soldiers—you, once as faithful as a member of the Old Guard to the memory of Napoleon. While I have turned friar, you, it seems, have turned traitor."

"Nay, nay, *mon garçon*," replied the old Frenchman, shrugging his shoulders and spreading out his hands in a manner that was characteristic of him; "you are a fakir, not a friar, *mon cher* Daubigny; while I—am still all that I ever claimed to be, a poor Jesuit, trying to follow in the footsteps of a Master Who was not above companying sometimes with publicans and sinners." And in the Priest's eye there now shone an expression that the Virginian loved to see there, because in bygone days it had

been so familiar—that magnetic twinkle speaking so silently of keen appreciation of jest.

Joséfa was still fondling her godfather, caressing his thin cheeks and stroking the silvered locks on his tonsured head, while with rapt attention he listened to Dabney's account of their journey, their hardships, their persecutions.

"Truly," said Father Clement, "life is a tangled skein; death only unravels its mystery. Why these things happen; why they are allowed, in God's own good time we shall know; for the Great Example shows humanity made perfect by suffering, and then—glorified!"

"But their conversation was interrupted by the excitement of two fresh captives being brought into camp.

"Full-blood'd pumpkin-face spalpeens this toime an' no misthake," observed Patrick Jack; adding: "Shure an' begorra! an' wan av 'em is a-howlin' loike a Banshee, which wud not be more thin yer wud expict, seein' th' creathure is a famale woman wid her lungs still free to use as she plases, anny-how!"

Joséfa's swift glance instantly recognized her—she was Niña. The other prisoner was a man near thirty years old. When these Mexicans were searched nothing of importance could be found on their persons, but Deaf Smith was of the firm conviction that they were couriers to Santa Anna.

"'Tain't no time," said he, "to let them slip by like hounds on a trail, for if thar's a scent of danger in the air they've got to out with it—and that in a hurry." And taking a lariat, Smith made a noose

and threw it over the Greaser's head with as much ease as a *vaquero* would have lassoed a steer. The other end of the rope was made fast to the upper limb of a salt-cedar, while the prisoner howled, cursed, and prayed.

"Now," commanded the Indian-hunter, speaking in Mexican, "tell the whole truth; don't bolt from the track; 'cause if you do I will give your mule a cut and then you can call on the buzzards to take you down."

Desperate, the man heard, and as he looked around him realized his life was not worth a *peso*, and so he pointed to his sombrero that had been knocked to the ground. Careful examination found concealed in the heavy silver coil band a dispatch that told Houston what he had not previously known as a certainty—that Santa Anna was with the advance guard of his army, and that he was only supported by his brother-in-law, General Cos.

The knowledge that General Urrea's division was not with Santa Anna came also in a curious way. For the woman Niña, seeing the measure that was being meted to her companion, and fearing the Texans would do her bodily injury, quickly produced from a secret pocket a letter that Ramon Urrea had intrusted her to deliver to Castrillo. After giving some details of his campaign, it closed thus:

"And now, my dear Juan, if on the very verge of battle your ear still itches with anxiety for news of Joséfa, know that my earnest sympathy makes me place Niña at your service, for she will, of all people, be most likely to find the runaway. Take heart and comfort yourself with the hope that all

may yet end well. 'Tis the old adage verified, 'The course of true love never runs smooth.' So with kindest felicitations, believe me,

"Your friend in peace and in arms,

"R— U—."

Daubigny's steel-blue eyes glittered when they fell upon those lines, and a scowl darkened his brow as between clenched teeth he muttered:

"Castrillo is here with Santa Anna—for his sake I hope I may kill him in battle; for kill him I surely will, and he deserves a dog's death rather than a soldier's."

Faint though these words were, the fervency of his speech brought their meaning to Joséfa's ears, arousing the Indian strain that usually was latent in her blood. Her eyes were wild and wide as she clutched her bosom and prayed like an Aztec priestess:

"O *Madre de Dios*, grant that Castrillo may fall like his forefathers, the Spaniards, did on the causeway of Anahuac, in that sad night when oppression first sought to seize this fair, this beautiful country."

Sam Houston, now knowing the strength of the enemy, determined to forthwith commence the attack. He did not miscalculate the disparity still in numbers between the Texans and Santa Anna's army, but he knew the mettle of his men. Plain backwoodsmen and frontiersmen though most of them were, armed with naught but rifles and bowie-knives, they surpassed in valor the trained minions of tyranny.

The topography of the San Jacinto prairie made it possible for the Texans to form into line unobserved by the enemy. They were drawn up to present as much face as possible, each column being deployed so as not to be outflanked by the Mexicans. General Houston was busy riding up and down the lines, surveying his troops. His face glowed; the glare of defiance lit up his countenance; his appearance was commanding, imperious—like a veritable king of battle. He believed the hour of destiny had struck. Addressing his soldiers, he said:

"You have been eager to fight. The time has now come; and with the battle-cry, 'Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!' I am ready to lead you to the victory that will establish the Independence of Texas!"

The eyes of all who heard him flashed, the look of vengeance settled on their faces, their blood turned to gall. A fife struck up, "Will you come to the bower I have shaded for you—Will you come? Will you come?" Curious tune that for such an occasion, but the Texans did not need the stimulus of martial music, for resolutely the line had broken into a double-quick. As they neared the Mexican camp, their swiftness seemed renewed. Charles Dabney, gripping his rifle tightly, broke into a run and led the charge, shouting the slogan, the death-dealing cry:— "*Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!*"

The army of Santa Anna, fagged out by its long march, having thrown up breastworks of pack-saddles and baggage-sacks, was quietly resting—enjoying an afternoon nap, a *siesta*, for the hour was

near three o'clock, and the sun shone on the prairie with enervating splendor.

The Texans came upon them like a thunderbolt from heaven; the game was caught in its lair. There was a crashing volley; an impetuous rush; rifles clicked again in a deafening din; then a mad struggle, a grapple, a butchery. The San Jacinto field was a human whirlpool, for never did braver hearts or stouter hands contend for liberty. Deaf Smith, having ventured too near the enemy's line, by the stumbling of his horse was thrown in their very midst. A Mexican started to run him through with his sabre. Smith drew his pistol, and, missing fire, quickly threw it at the Greaser's head and hit him. The man staggered back, and instantly the Indian-hunter snatched his blade and began to mow down his assailants.

There is little to tell of the Battle of San Jacinto. It was wisely timed and the work of a moment, for soon the Mexicans, demoralized, broken, routed, sought safety in flight. The Texans, following close on their heels, seemed like avenging angels pursuing them. The marsh rang with echo of carbine and slashing of sabre—but the Mexicans heard only the blood-curdling yell, "Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!"

The battle-cry was an elixir to the courage of the Texans, reviving as it did the memory of the brave and daring, who had not only been butchered but burned; so that patriotism and revenge cut down the enemy like a two-edged sword—the tall, oozy, down-trodden grass soaked up their blood.

Wherever the Mexicans turned to flee they found the Texans close on their tracks. Wrestling, falling, panting, dying, the Greasers—with the white fear of death in their faces—pleaded for mercy: "Me no Alamo! Me no Goliad!" they would cry out—but it was to no avail; and they died with the lie in their throats, for the avengers of Travis, Bowie, Bonham, and Crockett steeled their hearts against pity. Vengeance was let loose and the San Jacinto field had become the shambles.

The waves of the turbid Bayou and the enemy's wrath confronted the remnant of Santa Anna's force. Finding the bridge burnt, into the stream they plunged, for the chance of escaping a watery grave was preferable to the possibility of evading the avengers of Fannin's garrison. The Bayou literally ran with blood, yet on the Texans fought until Houston commanded them to stop the carnage, for the Battle of San Jacinto was won.

It was a victory that achieved the Independence of Texas and unfurled the banner of the Lone Star to recognition by the world.

When twilight settled down nearly all the Mexicans had been killed or captured. General Castrillo and Colonel Almonte were among the prisoners, but no one knew what had become of Santa Anna. Mounted on a fine black charger, the Dictator, with the usual cowardice of a tyrant, was the first to flee. Seeing him, Henry Karnes gave hot chase, not recognizing who it was, but simply guessing by his glittering uniform that he was an officer of high rank. An *Americano*, who was afoot, yelled to the

trapper the fugitive's name, and Karnes dug deep his rowels in his horse's flanks as he strained every muscle to catch him.

The pursuit led straight toward the Bayou, and the trapper, rejoicing that Deaf Smith had burned the bridge, felt confident of capturing him there, for the river ran broad, and deep, and swift. The Mexican rode with the speed of Mercury, and close on his tracks, with the bounds of a bloodhound, came the Texan's pony. When the water was reached Karnes saw horse and rider halt for a moment, and then, making a tremendous lunge, disappear. The next minute, arriving upon the scene, the trapper found the noble animal floundering desperately to reach the opposite bank, making the water rings spread in great circles—but the rider was nowhere in sight. Had he been caught by an undercurrent and hurled out of view? Had the waves sheltered him in their mercy—him who was ever merciless? The fate of Santa Anna was hence a mystery.

"He is drowned, he is bound to be drowned!" declared many of the Texans.

"Shure, an' 'tis that meself am belavin'. Th' shar-rk is dhrown'd daid by his guilt; that's what he is fer a fact," affirmed Jack, and turning to Karnes, added:

"Begorra! an' it's a good r-riddince av sich a pizenous ad-der-r that he's no longer on th' airth, goin' to an' fr-ro loike th' Divvil of ould!"

"Some snakes can live monstrous well in water," affirmed the trapper, who with a shake of his head and disappointment in his voice continued: "An' to think I might have kitched him—but 'twas a

miss that was wuss than a mile; howsomever, I hope to git him yit, for Henry Karnes won't believe Santy Anny is dead and done for, no, not till he sees every bone in his skeleton."

That night, like dandelions peeping forth in spring, the stars came out in the heavens; but the excitement of the day had been too great for sleep to lull the participants into rest. The victors were jubilant. The vanquished morose.

To celebrate the victory of San Jacinto the Army of Texas made huge bonfires. First one gleamed out, then another, with a flickering light that threw fantastic shadows; so that the soldiers looked like goblins, singing, dancing, shouting, and huzzaing. Each man felt himself a hero.

It was a curious sight to see these half-famished Texans helping themselves to every luxury from the spoils of the Mexican camp. Houston looked with lenient eye upon their harmless merriment, for they decorated not only themselves with their captives' possessions of knives, sabres, and pistols, but also their horses with the golden epaulettes and cap-cords of the enemy. The contents of Santa Anna's military money-chest being divided, each soldier received seven dollars—which was every penny ever paid to Sam Houston's brave men. But what cared they for money? Independence was far more precious.

When Charles Dabney received his portion, accepting it, he said:

"I shall keep this as a souvenir of one of the world's decisive battles, for such in truth is San Jacinto!" adding as he turned away:

"For the independence of Texas will keep Despotism from ever treading beyond the Rio Grande; and also heralds the awakening of all this great, rich country, westward to the Pacific, from the lethargy of Spanish sleep!"

And his words were the words of a seer.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE THORN IN THE FLESH.

The day following the battle the earth seemed wrapped in peace. The breezes from the sea blew over the marshlands; the sun, peeping forth with a rosy blush, lifted the veil of mist hanging low over the Bayou; and the morning shone transplendent with brightness, radiant with beauty.

Charles Dabney was early abroad, looking after the comfort of his horse. She was a fine animal and had proven capable of great endurance. In Dabney's composition lurked that element making him appreciative of a spirited steed—of good horse-flesh, which judgment was doubtless traceable from son to sire back to those who in halcyon, colonial days had made racing the gentry's ideal sport in the Old Dominion.

With Patrick Jack and two other Texans the Virginian now rode on to the Bayou to water his horse. Reaching the lagoon, the men pushed out into mid-stream, for their horses refused to drink the blood-stained water near the shore. Not far from where they stood the everglades were seen to move, which attracted the soldiers' attention, for the air hung motionless with that sultry calm that comes when the sun soaks up the dew. Watching

the rushes closely, a head was spied peeping out above the morass.

"Faith! shure an' it looks loike a mud-tur-rtle, a skill-pot, more than it does a land tar-rapin!" commented the Irishman, adding: "But Oi 'xpict its nawthin' but a damn Greaser afther awll."

"Yip," agreed one of the frontiersmen, "and I'll mighty soon finish him." And his rifle went up to his shoulder.

"Don't shoot," a voice remonstrated, "we've already killed enough of 'em—six hundred or more; so let's take him alive up to the bull-pen."

Suiting his acts to his words, this Texan rode over to where the Mexican was standing knee-deep in water, and, pointing his pistol in his face, commanded him to surrender and jump up in front.

"No," interposed Dabney, "let me take him along; for my mare is larger than your cayuse, and in the habit of carrying double." And the Virginian's thoughts, like electricity, flashed back to how Joséfa had been brought from Monterey.

The Mexican, though, had already mounted. A dejected, miserable-looking wretch he was, whose mean eye, thick, bestial lips and crafty expression might have made any one man think twice before giving him a lift on a journey; and the Texan was right in putting him in front, where he could be watched, for besides his scoundrelly appearance, on general principles every Greaser is too ready with his knife to ride in the rear.

Reaching the rope-bound corral where the seven hundred prisoners were confined, the new captive, with scant ceremony, was dumped in among them.

In the fraction of an instant the cry: "El Presidente! El Presidente!" rent the air—along with the throat-splitting cheer.

"Vive la Santa Anna! VIVE L' S-A-N-'T-A-N-N-A!"

For the soldiers of Mexico immediately recognized the mud-bespattered sinner as their god, despite his disguise of a common blouse jacket, white draggled trousers, and red worsted slippers, the last having been donned for the siesta that was interrupted by the Battle of San Jacinto—the evening snooze when Santa Anna's dream of the Texans trembling at his power had been shattered by a Marco Bozzaris in the person of Sam Houston.

Hearing the prisoners' exuberance, the Americans did not at first understand them, for their gibberish was so quick that their multitudinous voices made a jargon that carried more of sound than of articulate meaning.

When the truth became known a number of Texans leaped within the bull-pen, and the fate of Santa Anna would have been sealed at once had not the uproar of the prisoners awakened Houston. Calling to the Texans, he shouted:

"Don't kill him, boys; don't kill him! He is worth a thousand other prisoners!"

The camp-ground was now a bedlam. The Texans, crowding around to see Santa Anna, were loud in expressing their opinion as to the measure to be meted to the tyrant, for well they remembered his policy to American prisoners; and so angry mutterings and bitter curses filled the air. Then followed a most trying ordeal for Charles Dabney,

as General Houston bade him summon Juan Castrillo to act as interpreter for Santa Anna. So, though the Army of Texas had consummated a victory, there waged still in the Virginian's heart a conflict older than the strife of nations—the struggle of passion.

The letter from Urrea to Castrillo, intercepted from Niña, lay in the Virginian's breast-pocket, and seemed to challenge a vendetta, for it revealed clearly that the idea of marrying Joséfa to the Spaniard had not been abolished. The very sight of Castrillo was intolerable to Dabney. It was hard for him to remember that this man—his enemy who had wantonly heaped insults upon him at Salado; who had abducted his sweetheart and by cruel threats striven to force her into accepting his love; who had proven the bane of Joséfa's existence and brought manifold sorrows to her, to Father Clement, and to himself—that this man, this villain, was now the under dog, virtually helpless.

When Dabney told Castrillo that he was wanted by General Santa Anna, the Spaniard glared at him with a scowl that would have annihilated if a murderous look could kill, then his face mottled with anger as he arose to obey; but such was his rage that he fell in a fit—and thus it was that Colonel Almonte acted as interpreter at that memorable interview. For an hour or more the commanders-in-chief talked; and the Virginian, standing by, heard, and then with long strides he hastened to seek Joséfa and Father Clement to tell them all—all about Santa Anna, and all about that thorn in the flesh—Castrillo.

The day, still young, retained much of the freshness of the early morn. Away stretched the prairie, wide miles of tender marsh-like green, sprinkled with the red of geranium, begonias, and poppies, the aroma from which, blending with the sweet smell of grasses, came in long whiffs, making the air heavy scented, balmy, ambrosial.

The señorita was seated in her tent door picking the petals from a wild rose, while listening to the melody of a blue-bird that, perched on a nearby laurel limb, sang as if his little heart were bursting with the perfect gladsomeness of spring. The radiance in Joséfa's big black eyes reflected the same joy as she noted Daubigny approaching.

The Priest had already heard the news that Santa Anna was captured, and the old martial spirit that was within his breast stirred in anticipation of the details.

Dropping on the sward close by Joséfa's skirt, the Virginian whittled a stick as he talked. Father Clement listened, rapt and absorbed, and so did the girl, breathless and intent. With hands clasped loosely over her knees she rocked her body to and fro, vibrant with interest. Many was the admiring glance that her lover stole in her direction, noting how beautiful was her face, how symmetrical her figure, how graceful her pose. Then, though he answered Father Clement's questioning, his thoughts as on a pivot revolved around Castrillo; and Daubigny's determination to ever shield Joséfa from such a scoundrel grew more resolute.

"My suspicions were first aroused," Dabney was saying, "by the prisoner's fine linen shirt and dia-

mond studs, for no common Greaser would have worn either; so just as soon as the Mexicans began their howling when he was dumped into the corral, I knew he was Santa Anna."

"Did the Dictator appear frightened?" asked the Priest, eager for every detail.

"You bet he did! His dignity was crumpled to nothing, and his whole manner was that of a slinking, whipped hound. His skin even lost its swarthiness and turned gray, real ashen in his fear. A body to have seen him would have thought that he was suffering the agonies of the damned, or holding a review of the ghosts of the Alamo. Well, just cause he had for his fright! for we Texans would have torn him to pieces, limb by limb, but for General Houston."

The curl of Dabney's clean-shaven lip emphasized the disgust in his tone as he continued:

"General Houston's wounded ankle kept him from rising to meet Santa Anna, but otherwise he was treated with all possible courtesy. Those who saw Sam Houston then will never forget him, lying there under a big live oak, his head pillowed on his war saddle—the picture of dignity and manliness; while Santa Anna's appearance was such a contrast. He cried like a baby, yes, wept aloud; for the boys gathered close around him, and no interpreter was needed to tell what was passing in their minds. If we could have had our way we would have held a drum-head court martial and shot him on the spot, for he is a wholesale murderer, a butcher, and entitled to no consideration as a prisoner-of-war."

"O Carlos!" shudderingly exclaimed Joséfa; but Daubigney did not notice the interruption, and continued:

"The snake became calmer though, and insufferably arrogant after swallowing some opium. I don't see how Houston stood him; his eyes did flash fire when Almonte interpreted what Santa Anna had said."

"Were you near enough to hear?" asked the Priest.

"Yes, it was a rigmarole about Houston's being born to no ordinary destiny, as he had conquered the Napoleon of the West."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Father Clement almost angrily, and the greatest smirk of contempt that Dabney had ever seen there now shone in the corners of the Frenchman's mouth as he added:

"Bah! the fiend! Lucifer never fell so low as Napoleon would feel, could he hear the comparison. Such arrogance! Such impertinence passes all belief! Santa Anna is insane, he is mad; 'tis the ravings of lunacy, nothing less, *mon ami*; but go on, tell me more!"

"I think," the Virginian continued, "that the course Houston purposes pursuing, in retaining Santa Anna as a hostage, for a while, at least, is, to put it mildly, a very humane one. It demands the respect of the world—this clemency to one who has waged a war of extermination, showing no mercy to man, woman or child; but whether it is politic is more than I can say, more than any of us can vouchsafe, for Santa Anna is a wolf with the cunning of a fox."

"Indeed he is!" agreed Father Clement; adding: "And as full of deceit as a sleeping snake is of folds. The Mexicans now worship him; he is their idol, a demi-god; but in time—that great righter of wrongs—they will see that his feet are of clay. His capricious tyranny will fall unmasked, and if he does not lose his head as despots generally do, his old age will end in loneliness, disgrace and dejection."

The Priest's voice was sad, prophetic, like one whose knowledge of human nature—with its fickleness for fraud and loyalty to right—was beyond dispute; and in after years, when his words were verified, Dabney and Joséfa often referred to it in the light of a revelation.

The old Frenchman was still speaking, in a monotone soft and low, as if he were not conscious that any one listened; it was a way he had of communing with his thoughts:

"But General Houston's treatment of him was grand, was noble! To preserve not only his life, but to allow Santa Anna's return to Mexico, the land that he loves, that is dear to him!"

A sigh as of homesickness escaped Father Clement as he resumed:

"Since I have become an old man my feelings have changed, my prejudices are dropping off, my enmity is threadbare—but I do not miss them, for my lease of three score years and ten is well nigh out, and soon I shall quit this poor tenement of clay, this earthly habitation, for a better mansion, a heavenly home, I trust; but Time, though, has not blotted from my memory the rage, the scorn, the

contempt I felt toward the English when they banished our loved Napoleon!"

Then seeming to remember Daubigny's presence, he laughed a little as he added :

"The Americans, though, are not like the English—not exactly, at least; the soil over here has developed them, made them broader, more liberal, my son."

"But what will become of Uncle Ramon and General Castrillo?" prompted Joséfa, timidly though anxiously.

"The armistice stipulates that all Mexican forces are to be withdrawn from Texas soil; so that means your Uncle Ramon will cross the Rio Grande with trailing banners."

"But Castrillo—what of him?" faltered the señorita.

"General Houston will retain only such captives as shall insure the exchange of our prisoners. He deems it wise for the exact whereabouts of the Dictator to be kept secret, though there's a whisper that his highness will be taken to Galveston. As for the others, like Castrillo, they will be sent to San Antonio and confined in the Alamo until all our men are returned, then they will be liberated—and the war declared at an end."

"God grant it!" exclaimed the Priest with fervent solemnity.

"Castrillo to San Antonio!" repeated Joséfa, shaking her head—"Castrillo to San Antonio! Like a dark shadow he follows me always—everywhere."

"But, little girl, he is a shadow that need not frighten you now," assured Daubigney, "for I shall be by to shield and protect you."

"And to love me," supplemented she, as with a child's simplicity she raised her ruby lips for him to kiss.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE LADY OF HER DREAMS

It was a strange home-going—the return of Father Clement, Joséfa and Daubigny to San Antonio.

“After experiences such as ours,” said the Priest, “we will find it hard to take up our lives where we left off, for threads have been broken and rents made; but despite rough places we must go on.”

In the adobe formerly occupied by Don Ramon, on the Plaza de las Islas, the wanderers domiciled themselves; for since Strife had crossed his own threshold, the Jesuit never again set foot over the sill, so that the House of the Priest remained tenantless, save that occasionally a bat flew in at the window, or a lizard, lured by the sunshine, crawled forth to bask on the parapeted roof.

Joséfa pondered the changes that were taking place with sad eyes, for the vanquished belonged to her own race; but with Father Clement it was different. He was a man with stronger heart-strings, besides he had seen many revolutions and much bloodshed in his day, and so with a soldier's resignation accepted the inevitable. But it was with deep appreciation that he noted how the war had developed Daubigny, for the life of large endeavor

and active responsibility had done much for the Virginian, strengthening his character and broadening his heart. He was such a man as the Priest, of all the men he had ever known, would most willingly intrust with Joséfa's happiness; and so with parental solicitude he longed to see them made man and wife while he was alive to give them his blessing.

But ere this could happen a serious illness befell Daubigny that nipped all their plans. The long exposures and hardships of camp-life, particularly his Mier experience, together with his anxiety for Joséfa's welfare, had sapped his strength, so that his constitution did not resist that insidious foe—malaria—lurking in the San Jacinto marsh; and hardly had San Antonio been reached before fever overtook him, the terrible break-bone dengue, so dreaded by all Texans.

The disease made rapid progress and Dabney soon lapsed into a state of torpor. His eyes were dilated, immovable, showing no sign of reason, fixed as they were in vacancy, while nervous tremors shook his frame as he tossed in delirium. Joséfa assisted the Priest in nursing him tenderly, and although the Virginian continued too ill to recognize aught about him, his low sighs seemed to indicate that he appreciated their loving care.

One morning as the señorita sat by his bedside, turning to the Priest, she said:

"Padre, I had a queer dream last night, that troubled my sleeping moments, so that I feel as weary as if my rest had been foregone; and now, though I am here with you and Carlos, yet fear lingers with

me—a curious, doubting fear, impossible to describe.”

“Joséfa, my child,” spoke the Priest, “life as it comes usually brings with it a bountiful supply of sorrow, so try not to conjure up the imaginary wherewith to make thyself miserable.”

“But, Father Clement, from your own lips I have the story of a king who was troubled by a dream—a dream having a meaning. I wish you could read mine so as to prepare me for the future.”

“Your poor old godfather would not lift the veil of the future even if he could, which he cannot, for our Heavenly Father sees fit to show us day by day life’s pathway, otherwise we would not have the strength to journey onward. So do not seek to know what Providence has in store for you, my little one, my *chiquita*.”

“But, Padre, ’twas such a strange dream. It seemed I found a heart—a lovely heart, and that the heart was his.” She nodded toward the bed. “While trying to open the heart a horrible ogre whispered in my ear, ‘Joséfa, turn the heart so the light shines upon it and thou wilt not wish to enter.’ Obeying the ogre, I saw within the heart of Carlos a face such as I had never seen before. I should know that face were we to meet again. So beautiful were the features, at first I thought it was the picture of Our Lady; but there was no light behind her head, though there were flowers in her hair.”

“Dreams,” said the Priest, “are generally to be interpreted contrariwise. As for the image in Daubigny’s heart, if it were not the Holy Mother, per-

haps it was the next best friend God gives those born in sin—a mother.”

Joséfa shook her head dubiously.

“I do not believe it was Carlos’s mother—she was so beautiful!”

“Which is not conclusive reasoning, my child, for thy mother was also beautiful,” laughed the Priest, purposely misconstruing the señorita’s meaning, as he added while playfully patting her cheek:

“If you will think of the story I told you, the ruler, you remember, had to resort to a young man, an alien, to interpret his dream—for the wise and aged could not divine its meaning; and so I recommend an exile, a Virginian, as one who can best allay thy fears; but go now, take a breath of fresh air and let the wind blow all such cobwebs from your fancies.”

The girl obeyed, and when an hour later she returned her cheeks were aglow with the freshness of exercise. In her hand she carried a cluster of lilies, intended as a tribute to Daubigny, albeit he was too ill to know it. Restlessness and stupor had given place to languor. His lips were closed; his eyes open, they met hers with a sigh of content and quickly closed again. Joséfa, with a hungry gnawing at her heart, watched for some glimmer of hope, some prelude that his memory was returning, and that he felt her presence. She seated herself on the bedside, still holding the flowers in her hand.

They were alone together—Father Clement had gone for some cool water to moisten the cloth on Dabney’s brow.

Suddenly the invalid began to toss—it seemed a mental, rather than a physical paroxysm, that perturbed his spirit. Was it her nearness that had power to thrill him even on a bed of pain? Joséfa wondered; but she was soon to know. Dabney seemed conscious of himself, if not of his surroundings. The señorita's large black eyes were fixed on his face with intense devotion. She had longed so for this moment—when he would know her, when he would recognize her, not as a nurse, a ministering angel, but as his sweetheart, his love. The parched lips parted as if trying to speak. Joséfa bent low her head so that her ear might catch his faintest murmur, while a frenzy of yearning seized her soul. Opening wide his gray-blue eyes, the delirium of fever was the only light showing in them as the word "Angelica," like a sigh, escaped him.

The lilies dropped on the floor as if they burned the little brown hand that held them, while quickly, as if stung, Joséfa drew back—what did he mean? Angelica?—Angelica?—Angelica? Noticing he was again trying to speak, the woman, half Spanish and part Indian, bent nearer him, him whom she loved with all the wild passion of her hybrid nature. "Dear one!" he gasped in a whisper so low it was scarcely audible; but Joséfa heard. Her eyes brightened, a radiant smile overspread her rich red lips. Surely he meant no other than herself; perhaps "Angelica" was some pet name coined especially for her, just as she called him "Carlos." The thought of having misjudged him when he was helpless, of having doubted him when he was

ill, rushed over her like a condemnation of unworthiness, causing the tears to gush to her eyes.

Her heart was beating so wildly it deafened her, and putting her hand to her side Joséfa pressed it to still its throbbing, for a light illumined the sick man's face such as she had never beheld there during his waking moments. Dizzily she looked—what was it he seemed so glad to see? Could it be a beatific vision such as sometimes blesses the moments of those passing from the confines of the Present to the borderland of the Hereafter?

The possibility made her gasp! Was she losing him, him who was to her so precious? Was he slipping away from her while the words "Dear one" still lingered on his lips?

Joséfa grew sick at heart; the room seemed to swim before her; every object appeared dancing from its accustomed place. Was Carlos's hand moving with them? Surely it was creeping upward, languidly upward until it reached his heart; while the words "My guardian-angel" sounded on the air.

To the girl's mind swiftly came the idea that his heart pained him, along with the thought she should rub it to aid circulation. That he was dying Joséfa did not doubt, but she would not call Father Clement—for alone to the last the señorita wished to remain with her love. The dross of human affection corrupted the teachings of the Church; the pagan in her nature prevailed; she, she alone, the Vestal of his heart, was all-sufficient; the hour was too sacred; the time too holy to be shared with any one else. Bending low so that her black ringlets fell about him, Joséfa, starting to rub his heart, felt

something—something strange and hard that startled her.

What could it be?

It felt like a missal. Its weight perhaps oppressed the sufferer; and so the girl dexterously slipped her hand into Dabney's shirt-front, to the little under-pocket sewed there by himself. When she withdrew it a little brown leathern case was within her grasp.

Richly embossed with raised flowers, never before had Joséfa seen anything like it. She wondered what cut the ugly furrow across one side of it, but her wonderment was of short duration, for in examining it her hands touched a spring, causing the case to fly open, and Josefa saw—that which she had told the Priest she would recognize again—the lady of her dream.

Beautiful, fair, and young, the pure girlish face looked calmly into the burning orbs of the señorita, who glared upon her with all the jealous hatred of her race.

Every feature was scrutinized—was she not beautiful? A sad, sweet smile, betokening resignation, lingered about the mouth; like a nebula her hair of fine spun gold clustered back from a brow as placid as an angel's. It was such a face as would fill a heart and leave no room for any other, until death should loose the seal of earthly confines, and man and woman soul united in one, would go forth to be absorbed in that Love that is eternal.

The Virginian was still feeling about his left side with the instinct of a blind man. A look of worried

pain, of troubled disappointment overspread his countenance—but Joséfa cared not.

Her resolve was made—he should never again possess the picture, and so she thrust it within her bosom; while a bitter, cutting laugh rose to her lips, to be quickly smothered in the anguish of despair. All the warmth seemed to have gone out of her life; a dreadful emptiness crept into her heart; the dream, the face that had haunted her—was now a tangible reality to taunt her.

Dabney was speaking again. English words intermingled his speech; his voice, low and thick, seemed failing him; his sentences were broken, fragmentary—but Joséfa heard not. Numb and cold she felt, despite the sunlight stealing in through the doorway. Her joys seemed vanishing, everything seemed vanishing, as with the low, hurt cry of a dumb animal she fell in a deep, dead faint on the cot beside her love. How long she lay there or what happened afterwards she never knew, for when Joséfa opened her eyes again Father Clement was chafing her hands.

“Better go back to sleep, my *chiquita*, my little one,” he said kindly.

“Padre!” the word was uttered as a sigh—“Padre, my dream has come true.”

“Hast thou been dreaming, my child?”

“The old dream, I mean, of which I told you.”

“Why sayest thou that?” the Priest asked, gently stroking her hair.

“I heard him call *her* name; I saw the look of adoration on his face; I heard him mutter ‘angel,’” sobbed the girl; “and so I know ’tis true.”

"Not so fast, Joséfa, dear," gently rebuked her godfather; "not so fast, *ma chère*." Then he paused, thinking what he could best say as comfort; and when the silence was broken, it was the voice of the Jesuit that spoke:

"Is it wrong to adore an angel?" he adroitly asked.

"No," replied Joséfa, "if the angel be in heaven."

"Heaven is the abode of angels," Father Clement staunchly affirmed.

"Of guardian-angels?" incredulously the girl queried.

"Unless Saint Peter in his mercy to erring mortals lets them pass the pearly gates."

"But what are guardian-angels?" persisted she.

"Harmless creatures, my little one, like patron saints."

"But Carlos is a heretic; he does not believe in the saints," asserted the girl.

"Be that as it may, his creed may substitute some equivalent for them; just a distinction in words, Joséfa, dear, though the meaning is about the same. They are quibbles for theologians, which a little mind like yours had best not worry over; for the English have a prejudice against some words seemingly very harmless to us."

Then softly imprinting a good-night kiss on her tear-wet cheek, and bidding her try to sleep, Father Clement left the room.


Dabney needed him. The crisis of his sickness had come. The fever having broken, he was as cold as death, as weak as a babe. A few hours, the Jesuit

knew, would decide whether he would recover or whether earthly sufferings would forever cease.

In the next room the señorita lay awake, thinking. She had never exactly understood the *Americano*, though her admiration had found with him no fault; yet her passionate soul craved a passionate adoration, and now she began to feel that she had given more than she had received.

Castrillo had expressed his love for her with the fervor of a Spaniard; Daubigny's deep devotion spoke more powerfully than words, effusions—but the señorita, in her jealousy, did not weigh the difference. The Virginian had so fully filled her requirements of a hero that she had never before questioned the possibility of her not being, perhaps, the heroine of his *ideals*, the woman who would be his heart's desire. Things trivial in themselves, which had previously borne no meaning, now swelled in her memory like a foamless wave that rose and fell, governed by an unseen force, but holding in its ebb the terror of deep water. Her thoughts were maddening; and Joséfa changed, changed quickly, as the climate of Texas changes from beauteous, balmy mildness into the fierce, breezing norther.

The little rill of savage blood in her veins had swollen into a sweeping flood, drowning the teachings of Father Clement. Hopelessness urged it on, though despair, like a whirlpool, awaited to engulf her. The girl's eyes were dry—her longing for revenge, like a simoon, dried the mist of tears—for Joséfa was planning, planning—planning to avenge herself.



The bitterest humiliation that can flood a woman's soul overwhelmed her; the consciousness of having given her love for naught—to one who did not prize it but already preferred another. She felt she hated the unknown siren whose charm was still upon him. Him she despised for having allowed another to quaff the sparklets and rich red wine of his heart, leaving only the dregs for her. And yet the truth remained—she still loved him, and of her great love came this great jealousy. Splendid and beautiful he would always seem in her eyes—he who had awakened the heart of a woman within her. She understood now the sensations of a traveler with a parched tongue in a desert land. But if the spring of happiness were beyond her reach, then she would stop him before he grew well and strong, and went perhaps to enjoy it with that woman whose picture he had worn above his heart.

Very cautiously Joséfa slipped from her bed, and with the noiseless tread of a ghost tripped across the floor until, reaching Dabney's door, she paused to listen and to look.

The room was filled with shadows.

All was still.

The sick man was resting quietly. The turning point in his illness having been safely passed, Father Clement, weary with the night's vigil and anxiety, dozed in his chair.

Creeping like a cat, with every sense alert, Joséfa's eyes quickly spied the belt-knife of the Virginian. Yes, it would answer her purpose; his own weapon should deal the blow that would hurt him, even as his words had stabbed her heart.



"All the savagery in her nature was aroused, nerving her to do the deed."

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Reaching the bed, she leaned over Carlos, to peer once more into the face she loved so well; and then the recollection of the expression it had worn when the word "Angelica" escaped his lips swept over her, bringing with it a torrent of hate. All the savagery latent in her nature was aroused, nerving her to do the deed. Slowly she raised the knife, her eyes glittering with a light not sane. As she started to move her arm to deal the death-blow, a maddened laugh burst from her lips, more jarring than the scream of epilepsy. With a leap Father Clement seized the girl, knocking the knife from her hand, and it fell to the floor with a clanking sound.

"Wouldst thou commit murder!" he shrieked. "O Joséfa, my child, my child! Is it for this that I have lived; for this that Père Clement has been spared; for this he has spent his life in trying to train thee in the path thou shouldst go?"

With a weak, uncertain step the girl tottered, and would have fallen had not the Priest closely folded her in his arms, while his tears dampened her hair. Joséfa clung to him convulsively, burying her face on his breast, sobs shaking her frame—the terrible, heartrending emotion of physical reaction.

"Ah, my child," said Father Clement, "I have never told you before, but if his guardian-angel had not turned the enemy's ball, your sweetheart's bones would have bleached on the plains of Goliad."

Joséfa understood then the torn side, the bullet furrow, on the little leathern case, and felt in a measure comforted; while tears of repentance mingled with tears of joy—that Daubigney still lived, lived for her to still love him.

The days that followed slipped by swiftly.

Never was an invalid more fondly nursed than he, never a sufferer who received gentler and more loving attention. The old days seemed indeed to have returned—the lotos-eating days that first brought the Virginian the friendship of the Priest and the love of Joséfa.

Dabney submitted readily to the Frenchman's injunction to remain quiet and eat little, for he was content with the scene about him and enjoyed feasting his eyes on the loveliness of the señorita. Her face held in it more than the old charm of bright eyes, perfect coloring and youth. It was mysteriously changed. A brooding tenderness seemed to emanate from her—for such is the compassionate heart of a woman, his feebleness touched her more than ever had his strength. His eyes grew to follow her about the room, to watch her every movement. Joséfa's slightest touch could soothe his aching brow more quickly than the remedies suggested by Father Clement, who, though willing, being a man, was awkward in those little cares which conspire to the comfort of the sick when whims and caprices mark the mile-stones to recovery.

This sweet, placid contentment—profound, unbroken—would have been an Eden to Joséfa but for the fruit of suspicion that grew out of the daguerreotype. Never since that awful night had the Priest mentioned it to her, so that it still remained a mystery, a subject rife for speculation. Joséfa, with a vague superstition, wondered sometimes if the picture were some deity whom he worshipped instead of the Blessed Virgin—if so, then explained were all

the hardships that Daubigny had suffered; it was his punishment for having a strange goddess, for being a heretic. But religion never yet stilled the pangs of jealousy, for as long as the heart is human it does not crave celestial consolation, and religion with passion is as incompatible as water with oil. So doubts would gnaw at the señorita's heart whenever she looked at the lovely face in the case, the little leathern case she could not make up her mind to restore. Sometimes she would catch Dabney with a far-away expression on his face, for though Time had seared his remorse, the scar remained—and Memory would point to his past with a cruel finger and bid him look. Where her lover's thoughts were at such times worried Joséfa. Were they traveling back to that part of his life of which she knew not—beyond the mountains whence he had come?

One evening, seeing this mood strong upon him, forgetting her pride, she determined to fathom the mystery of the picture, to penetrate his past.

"Why are you so sad, Carlos?" she asked. "One would think you had lost something."

Her voice startled him, breaking the chain of his reverie; and unthinkingly he replied:

"I have."

"When?" And her heart stood still, for she hoped, yet feared, he might mention the daguerreotype; but the Virginian was not the man to talk of himself, and so sadly he answered:

"Long years ago, it now seems, though memory at times makes it fresh."

His tone was misleading, his manner diverted suspicion; and such was her temperament, her sympathy quivered like a smitten harp-string.

"Tell me," she pleaded.

"I cannot," he answered wearily, for his honesty made it impossible for him to deceive her; but detailing to this woman, who loved him passionately, the one stain on his youth was an intricacy not to be thought of—and yet he felt it was unfair she should not know.

"Was it by death?" prompted she.

"A death was the cause," he explained truthfully, though his meaning was equivocal.

Joséfa quickly arose and drew near Daubigny. Placing her arms about his neck, with face pressed close to his, so that he could feel the touch of her hair, the warmth of her breath, she whispered:

"Do not grieve over the Past, Carlos. It will not bring it back. Joséfa loves you so dearly, it pains her to see your sadness." And she gave him her lips to kiss, her rich red lips trembling with the ecstasy of passion—the overflow of her pure young heart, a heart that like a bird with untried wings fluttered in her breast.

CHAPTER XXV

THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

The cormorant War winged its way from Texas when the army of Santa Anna, with banners furled, crossed the Rio Bravo del Norte. The seed of animosity against the *Americanos*, sown by the enemy, however, soon sprung up among the Indians, and changed the wake of tyranny's exodus into the war-path.

The Comanches, once indifferently friendly to the whites, stirred up by emissaries from Mexico, had now become particularly hostile and treacherous. Like Ishmaelites, their hand against every man; with their wild friends the Lipans, Kiowas, and Apaches, they roamed the country from the Llano Estacado to the San Saba and Rio Grande. From every hill their smoke signals, those strange, inimitable beacons of the redman, curled heavenward in a thin, gray, spiral line, spreading out at the top like mushrooms against the sapphire sky.

Earth showed also terrible traces of their presence, for their pony tracks and the blackened prairie and smouldering ruins of cabins silently spoke of outrage and massacre. Each frontiersman brought fresh news of crime, so that something had to be done to preserve the settlers, their wives and chil-

dren, from the depredations of savagery—the tomahawk, the scalping-knife, and the torture-stake; or that worse fate—the degradation and abasement of adoption into their tribes.

Wherever a group of Rangers met, their talk ran on nothing else.

"Yip," Deaf Smith was saying, "Big Terrapin's got more scalps from burnt cabins than any other red devil. Can't nobody kill that Injun? I've shot him myself many a-time, an' ther bullets jist glance off his red belly like hail off a house side. It's conjure, an' that's what makes him so powerful 'mong other tribes; 'tain't nothin' short of a charmed life."

"I would like to get my hands on him," spoke up Big Foot Wallace, who had just returned from Mexican bondage. "I bet I would choke his gizzard out of him."

"P'raps you might, an' thin agin, p'raps you mightn't," said Deaf Smith; adding: "Though 'tain't six in one hand an' half dozen in t'other—but nine to one, 'fore you knew he was 'round you'd hear th' twang of a bow or th' whiz of a arrow, an' never know 'twas Big Terrapin whar shot it, unless your swimming eyes open to see him shakin' the blood from your scalp. That Injun can blind his trail so 's I can't keep up with him, though 'tain't many of 'em can fool me; but when it comes to Terrapin, he's full of doubles as a fox."

"Well," interposed Charles Dabney, "it's all the Mexicans' doings; let Big Terrapin alone and he is not a bad Indian."

Deaf Smith closed one eye with a squint that spoke volumes, as shaking his head dubiously, he said:

"Not a bad Injun, as Injun goes; but 'tis as nat'r'al fer a copper-head to sting as 'tis fer a 'possum to love p'simmons."

The Indian-hunter paused as he fumbled in the pocket of his leather breeches, and when his hand came forth he slipped a quid of tobacco in his mouth, then continued:

"But t'ain't no use, not a bit, fooling yerselves by believin' yer can beat Injuns fightin' in battle. Jim Bowie and his brother Rezin almost did it once; and what did the Comanches do but set fire to the tall grass, an' 'twas more'n yer life was worth to open yer powder-horn on that pr-yrie. If yer meet on the plain, 'tis the same way, fer they can burrow in the sand like red ants and swarm out when yer least 'xpict an' sting yer to death. No, war is the'r own game an' they whip every time. Ridin' an' shootin' is the'r life, the'r delight; besides, they can thrive on privations whar would kill one of yer, fer if at mealtime a buffalo ain't handy, why a lizard, a scaripin is food 'nough fer 'em; so hearken to my words, try to git 'em to make a treaty with yer—that will be the best plan."

Heeding his advice, the Texans invited the Comanches to come to San Antonio, in order that some terms might be agreed upon for the protection of colonists—for the grasp of the American nation fulfilling its mighty destiny was encroaching upon the land, converting waste places into farms and orchards. Along the old San 'Tone Road creaked the camp-wagon of the settler, and on the street of every hamlet was the barrel of grease, mixed with tar, to help turn the wheels in the progress of civili-

zation. The days of romance were gliding away; conditions were changing, slowly but surely, like the glacier moves inch by inch; and the furrows cut by the settlers' wagon wheels would widen into a channel deep enough for American prosperity to enter. It only needed time—time; a few more years and the track of the buffalo and the pioneers' trail would be shod with steel, and instead of the land echoing the thrum of the guitar, the plains would reverberate the shriek of the locomotive.

In response to the white men's summons, a party of sixty odd Comanches, including braves, squaws and children, entered the old Spanish city, San Antonio de Bexar.

Ten of the chiefs went within the Council House to consider a treaty. Big Terrapin was their leader. As usual, he wore his hunting-shirt, the fringe of which was dyed vermilion, while the porcupine quills on his breeches were of the same color. He did not have on his war-bonnet. One eagle feather only was bound close to his forehead.

It was hard for the Texans and the Indians to come to terms, to any agreement that was satisfactory to both parties. The Rangers insisted that the savages should give up all white captives held within their tribes. The Comanches denied that there were such among them, and the Americans' tenacity as to this point was met by obdurate, stubborn contradiction. The Rangers then informed the chiefs that they would be retained as hostages until their white prisoners were produced.

Not until now had Big Terrapin spoken. His look commanded attention and every ear listened; though he used a patois part Spanish, part Indian, that was a thrilling roll of sound, each cadence brimmed with significance.

"My brothers," he said, resting his eyes on the chiefs, "there are wrongs to be wiped out on both sides. The Comanche may be mean—but the white man, is he better? The Pale Face steals as well as the Indian. We take your people because you have taken our land.

"Many moons have passed since my father was a great chief; but in his day, the day of Gray Wolf, the Nacogdoches were carrying sand and water to build the prayer-house for the Spanish Fathers; the Tehas were planting corn along the Trinity; the Wacoos were singing their songs to the music of the Brazos; but only the war-path delighted the Comanches. All the land westward to where the sun dips into the desert was their hunting-ground. The Great Spirit, our Father, had given it to us, and we loved it like the lap of a mother.

"The white man is stealing it from us.

"If we allow him to come, soon the Comanche will have to burrow for a home like the prairie-dog, for there will be no space for his wigwam. His limbs will then wax stiff from lack of use and our chiefs will be like squaws.

"Better let the war-fever spread; better to die tomahawk in hand than to be conquered and pent up like tame cattle, when ours is the spirit of the bison!"

Big Terrapin paused; the silence was intense; his feelings lighted his grim countenance like a con-

suming fire. His blood was up—he slapped his hand to his thigh, then leaped wildly in the air, brandishing the Toledo blade the Priest had given him, as he started the blood-curdling war-whoop.

The chiefs immediately began to fight their way out, for Big Terrapin's speech had effected them as maguey-juice, the stimulant with which they craze themselves for the war-path.

A massacre ensued.

Many of the citizens of San Antonio, among whom was the Virginian, had gathered on the plaza, and were amusing themselves by watching the Indian children shooting with bow and arrow at money set up for targets. Their enjoyment was suddenly broken upon by the terrible noise within the Council House.

Charles Dabney, knowing Big Terrapin was among those who struggled—with the memory of past kindnesses and his English love of fair play—dashed up to the window, calling the Indian to jump out and escape on his horse.

"No, me big Chief! Big Brave!" yelled the Comanche. "Me die with my people!"

Lifeless on the floor were stretched the bodies of his comrades. The squaws on the plaza were fighting furiously, desperately. The Texans surrounded Big Terrapin like hounds baying a stag. His strength was marvelous, his courage pathetic, as stoically he met his fate—but with such daring valor that few dared go near him, for the rapier twisted and turned in his hand like a living thing. Desperately angered, the paroxysm of rage upon him cried for blood and vengeance, reckless of his safety.

While foes in front held his attention, Big Foot Wallace sprang upon his back with the leap of a panther. With iron grasp he clutched the Comanche's throat, his fingers closing like a vise. The Indian tried to shake him off, but to no avail—his snakey eyes widened, his bronze skin began to assume a saffron tint, as black spots, veiled in mist and strangely blurred, passed in a blinding veil before his vision. Then as he sunk down with a hoarse gurgle, a Ranger put his pistol to his forehead and fired, but stepped back quickly as a curious jingling sound, as of tiny chains falling together, met his ear. It was the mystery of the Chief's charmed life, for beneath his buckskin shirt was a linked coat-of-mail, that had cheated alike bullet and spear.

How Big Terrapin came by it, there was none to tell. Perhaps some adventurous spirit had used it as a safeguard when following Cortez and the banner of old Spain. Perhaps it had descended from some Crusader who had worn it battling for the Holy Sepulchre; or maybe it was used by some knight of Granada in trying to keep the alien Moor out of his country, just as the Comanche resented the incursion of the paleface. Perhaps—who knows?—for the desert gives up its secrets grudgingly.

It was hard to think, as Big Terrapin lay there with his blood seeping down on the floor, that he was dead—that he would never stir again—nevermore go on the war-path, or ride a familiar figure through the streets of old San 'Tone.

Dabney came in quietly and knelt beside his body, for this Indian had been his friend—Joséfa's friend. With the fringe of the Chief's shirt he wiped the

warm blood from the coppery face and turned him over and straightened out the massive limbs, fast growing rigid. As he did so his eye spied on the Comanche's hand the Daubigney signet-ring, with its armorial bearings; and quickly over the Virginian swept the tide of old associations—like a little thing, the jostling of a pebble may start an avalanche. Slipping the ring from the dead man's finger Dabney put it in his pocket and arose to go. Unknown to him, the Priest had also entered the Council House and picked up the rapier from the floor—the rapier of Toledan finish that the Chief had prized so dear.

As the Virginian passed out, Father Clement handed it to him, saying:

“My son, I wish you to have this—’twas my sword, and so far as I know its history, has not a stain on it. Take it—keep it—and use it only in the cause of honor and right.” The old Frenchman's voice sunk low as he added, “And in protecting my child—that is to be your wife.”

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BLADE THAT WON.

The next morning, as Dabney was crossing the plaza near the Cathedral of San Fernando, he spied Wallace coming down the street.

"Wait there," cried Big Foot, "for I've got a lot to tell you that happened to us Mier prisoners after you and Pat Jack got away."

The Virginian paused for his compatriot to join him, and the big, black-haired Ranger, soon by his side, said:

"Come, let's go in that tavern yonder and talk things over. It rests with us," he added laughingly, "who come from the older States to help civilize this new country; to teach 'em our good old customs like peach and honey and mint julep and cocktail, instead of *pulque*, *mescal* and *aguardiente*, all meaner than raw cider. It will take time, though, my friend, and in the interim how will whiskey straight suit you?"

Dabney nodded his head, so whiskey was brought.

Big Foot, lifting his glass, said:

"Ole Virginny!"

Hardly had Dabney's clinked, before Wallace, having gulped his down, ordered another. Again

their glasses touched, and the toast, heartily drunk, was:

"Sam Houston, the hero of San Jacinto! The liberator of Texas!"

"More!" shouted the convivial ex-captive, and raising his bumper, with a merry twinkle in his eye, he cried: "May the señorita Joséfa soon be the señora Daubigney!"

Then arm-in-arm they left the room and seated themselves on the tavern's step, for the spot was shady, despite the sunlight flooding the old city of Bexar.

"Well, as I was saying," Wallace began, as a kind of preface to his Mier reminiscences, "the Mexicans put us to work carrying sand to make a road to Santa Anna's palace. It was hard to tote dirt for such a snake, and being chained together two and two didn't make it no easier. Now, you know, Dabney, there's a word about bearing one another's burdens. I disremember where it comes from, but I reckon like the old parson used to say when he couldn't classify a passage, 'If 'tain't in the Good Book, you mighty likely to find it is in the catechism.' And so we tried it, this lightening of others' burdens; but you know Scripture can't always be applied literal, so we that had strong teeth bit holes in our comrades' sacks and the burdens then lightened themselves, for the way the sand run out was a caution! Later they sent us to Perote, where the dungeon air was so foul lots of the poor boys couldn't stand it, and passed in their checks."

"I reckon you all thought your time had come," remarked Dabney.

"Dying be damned!" vociferated Wallace. "It would take more than a stench to make us give up hope. We were planning to get out, some way or other, though the prison windows, not much larger than a pigeon hole, showed us 'twan't goin' be no easy job, for thicker walls I never saw. Then, as luck would have it, the Mexicans put us to work again—not to doing man's work, Lord love you, but the work of beast!

"Yes, sir, we were hitched to carts and made to haul dirt. They treated us exactly like horses, so we determined to use our horse-sense. We would run away—play we were skeart, shy in the road and make them old carts go lumbering along at such a gait, we knocked off the corners of lots of 'dobes. 'Twas fun for us to hear the owners come out and cuss; for the Mexicans can swear, sir; wuss than sailors or even Texans!"

Wallace, supplying himself with a fresh quid of tobacco, continued:

"Bym'by, as there was no chance to escape in the day, we thought we would burrow out at night. The alkali dust would get in our throats, but we'd cough and scratch on; and 'fore long the hole got big 'nough for some to squeeze through and get away. But when one fat fellow got stuck and had a devil of a time sliding back, I said to myself, 'Big Foot, be patient, old man, fer you ain't built to go through the eye of a needle.' That's another expression from the catechism that stuck in my head like a cuckle-bur. Well, I said, says I, 'Bide your time, don't risk it; wait a while, old chap.' Soon the tunnel was discovered, and what might have

happened to us ain't pleasant food for thought; but just afterwards came the order to have us liberated."

"Which reminds me," said Dabney, "that today is the time appointed to liberate the Mexican officers that have been detained here. My duties as provost-marshal will necessitate my seeing Castrillo again, though I wish it were not so."

"A meaner devil," said Wallace, "never drew the breath of life. I can see him now chuckling over the boys drawing black beans. It makes my blood boil to think about it, and 'tis well for him that I don't give him his parole, or 'twould be a death sentence instead.

When, later in the day, Dabney entered Castrillo's presence, the Mexican gave him a quaint Spanish salute, and grimaced horribly as he broke into a laugh satanic in its mirth.

"My congratulations," he said mockingly; "my congratulations to Carlos Daubigny; for my leaving Texas means to him joy, bliss, the undisputed possession of a pressed flower—a bauble that in times past furnished me amusement and will now doubtless give him the same."

The Virginian stood listening, his brow dark with menace, his face livid with rage. Hardly had this insult passed the Spaniard's lips before Dabney struck him full in the mouth with the back of his hand.

There were few men more vile and craven than Castrillo; and out of a heart black as hell his jealousy had prompted the exultant villainy of this speech. Grinding his teeth, he hissed;

"You take advantage, sir, of my position as a prisoner-of-war; for were I free, my knife would laugh in the heart of one who dared so insult me." His nostrils distended, and again that harsh, strident laugh of derision sounded on the air.

"There you are mistaken," Dabney hotly replied, his face now deadly pale. "I would never screen myself behind my government in wreaking a personal vengeance. I am not in Salado but you are in San 'Tone, and the reverse of positions will not make me forget what befits my honor as a gentleman. Today we meet as equals; for you are free, Castrillo, and there is no need for this affair to be arranged in the regular manner. It is your privilege, señor, to name the weapons."

"Swords!" came the curt reply.

"Agreed," said the Virginian, who quickly disposed of the arrangements necessary for the liberation of the other prisoners, then returned to Castrillo, telling him he was ready; and together the rivals went forth to their fate.

A wood of pecans not twenty yards away was selected as the spot for the duel. Soon through the autumn's foliage, like the stained-glass windows of some vast cathedral, streamed the sunlight on the flash of steel.

The men played their swords well.

Dabney, tall and fair, looked paler than usual; while Castrillo's dark, blood-shot eyes gleamed with murderous hate, for a devil's mood was on him, and he fenced with a wrist of iron. It was not the first time he had locked horns with a stag, though the Virginian's unerring precision was a surprise to him.

Their blades clashed, then glided along one another to the hilt, the swords twisting and hissing as sparks shot forth.

Suddenly the Spaniard, panting with rage, drew back and lunged with a straight thrust at Dabney's heart; but without spitting him, for the blow was parried and the fight went grimly on.

The long blades described circles and looked like hairs of silver. Castrillo was more practiced in the art of fencing, and seemed likely to wear his opponent out, though Dabney's countenance showed no sign of submission, no trace of fear. The Virginian made up in determination what he lacked in cunning, though he was growing desperate, for the artifice by which his adversary caused his rapier to seem a foil made a mockery of his efforts. His blood boiled and he fought as a game-cock fights with gaffs.

The Spaniard uttered an ugly oath as he set his jaws; and maddened, both gathered their forces and fenced as men do only when the life of the other means satisfaction.

Castrillo, lithe, vicious, dogged, aimed another thrust that might have been effectual had not his foot been caught in a vine, causing him to stumble slightly, so that the point of Dabney's blade scratched his arm with a nasty slash.

Smarting with pain, he sprang at the Virginian with a frantic lunge.

He was left-handed, and though Dabney was alert and wary, it kept his eyes busy following the swords.

The men's bodies came close together, and Castrillo, determined to kill his rival by fair means or

foul, bending suddenly, unexpectedly forward, tried to stab the Virginian with a knife held in his right hand. It was the work of a second, and Dabney had wrenched it from him and dashed it far away, muttering between clenched teeth:

"You dastard! You devil!"

The Spaniard, realizing he had played his last card, cheat though it was, swore unsparingly, as rallying his spent strength he made a last desperate effort.

The Virginian's blade twisted as only Toledan mettle can, and sent the other's sword hurtling from his hand as it ran him through. *The blade blessed by the Priest had won!*

Castrillo's body sank limp to the ground. The pupils of the blood-shot eyes rolled under their heavy lids, while his tongue lolled from his mouth, whence oozed a bloody spume. He lay like a crushed worm—a viper—a sight not pleasant to look upon, and Dabney quickly turned away. Stooping down he wiped his sword on the grass, saying:

"The Priest gave it to me to shield Joséfa; and now that earth is well rid of him, I trust my darling's life may henceforth be filled with happiness and peace, as it shall be—God willing!"

And so it was as the purple twilight settled over the old town of Bexar, Dabney rapidly wended his way to the adobe on the Plaza de las Islas.

The little daguerreotype still remained a mystery—a mystery which Joséfa had solved with a woman's intuition. It was the picture, she believed, of a dead sweetheart; and yet the fear that she might perhaps be still alive kept the señorita from asking

questions. She longed for the truth of her supposition, but feared lest greater knowledge might bring greater grief. The dimple near Joséfa's mouth had begun to fade into a plaintive little line, for that keen blast that ever withers a woman's heart blew upon her in the knowledge that her lover did not give her his confidence—for love without confidence is like a nut without a kernel.

Dabney, too, felt the change in their relationship, and ascribed it, as he did every sorrow that beset him resolute to tell her all. No spectre of doubt the unalterable past that was widening the distance between them. And yet how could it better matters to discuss them? It might be like lifting the lid of Pandora's box, whence the secret of his life escaping, might carry naught save misery to Joséfa's heart. But now the great love that he bore her made him, to part of his punishment; yes, it was his past, should stalk between them; nothing should separate him from her whom he loved for all her womanliness of character, all the purity of her clean white soul.

"Joséfa," he said, holding her little hand close in his, "I wish to slip on your finger a ring that will signify our betrothal. It is a curious old ring—see, by touching that spring in the bezel it widens or lessens to fit the finger that wears it. You have seen it before,—Big Terrapin won it for saving my life,—and now, darling, you have won it for making my life worth saving; for, little girl, that is the debt I owe you, a debt I never can repay unless you will let me be your slave, your peon for life.

"This ring, as you see," he continued, "is engraved with a motto—the Daubigney motto—which reads, 'He conquers who overcomes himself.' Now, I could never have conquered myself but for the love I bore you; that has been my salvation. Through this little hoop of gold I see my past—not a very creditable one, but not wicked as men count wickedness, save for one rash act. Listen, darling, it is this that I dread to tell you—for will you love me as much when you know that I fled to Texas because accidentally I had killed my brother? Heaven knows I did not mean to do it, and bitterly I have been punished, and God is my witness that I have been truly penitent. My brother bribed the servants to tell my father lies, and when at my parent's death-bed I learned by his intrigue that my name had been left out of the will, I struck him a blow with the butt of my riding-whip; that ended his life and ruined mine. Then the idea seized me to put as great a distance as possible between me and my crime, so that explains my coming to the frontier. Your influence and Father Clement's have helped me to outlive evil rather than be overcome by it. Many has been the night when I would clasp this circlet of gold and pray to be a better man; for this ring girdled all the memories of my boyhood, and was the sole reminder of my duty as a D'Aubigney to retrieve my past."

The Virginian had spoken rapidly, with his eyes set before him; now he paused to steal a glance at Joséfa. The señorita's face reflected the feelings and emotions caused by his story. A mist of tears dimmed the brightness of the look that she bent

upon her hand as she held it out and scrutinized the ring

"I could never have conquered myself," Dabney reiterated, "unless you had conquered my heart; and so this ring is a talisman, a pledge of our love."

Still the girl did not speak; and Dabney did not know how to interpret her silence.

"I do not wish," he began, then hesitated,—the words were so hard to say,—"I do not wish," he faltered again, "God knows, to bring the bitterness of this sorrow into your life; and if now, much as it would cost me, you prefer to link your fate with another—it is not—too late."

But Joséfa was not thinking of what he was saying—she was thinking of the daguerreotype.

"No, Carlos," she said; "but I—feel as if I must be all—everything to my husband—that there must be no other woman in his heart—unless it is the Blessed Virgin." Then she could not explain herself further, for though she struggled piteously, no sound came forth, and in her despair her hands went to her eyes as if to blot out a vision, for before her mind rose the lovely girlish face in the little leathern case.

Dabney glanced at her shrinking air, her nervous hands pressed against her forehead—and he could not understand.

"Little girl," he said, "I have given you all the love and devotion of my soul. You are my only love—the lone star in my heart. The rapture of your kisses, the touch of your arms could draw me to the ends of the earth to find you. I have looked forward to the time so eagerly when the war should

be over and I could gather you to my heart, my very own; for anticipation, darling, is not enough for a man like me—I crave the fruition of my dreams, my hopes.”

Joséfa clasped her soft arms about his neck and looked up into his face with unutterable affection.

“My love,” he whispered, gathering her yielding body closer, “our hearts, our lives are blended now and forever!”

“Yes, forever!” she repeated between his kisses. And then fully satisfied, fully assured that rival she had none, Joséfa slipped her hand in her pocket and handed Dabney the little leathern case, saying:

“Now, Carlos, you can have this.”

A puzzled expression flashed across his face and his tone changed as he asked:

“Where on earth did you get it?”

Joséfa’s large black eyes were fixed on him with startling inquiry, for she could see the sight of the picture stirred him strangely, and with quivering lips she asked him whose the likeness was.

“My sister Angelica,” he replied, “whom I loved devotedly. It was she who at our hasty parting pressed my father’s ring upon my finger and bade me be worthy of my lineage and the motto.”

The Virginian sighed, and the señorita’s velvety arms again stole round his neck in a loving embrace—for there was no longer any mystery, any secret, any past to divide them. The present, the moment, was all in all to him and to her. A happiness intense, filled with the great wonder of love, leaped from their souls as they gazed into each other’s eyes and read therein lasting joy—heart affinity—bliss

divine; for earth had become an Eden of their very own.

The shades of evening had gathered; the moon, stealing into the sky, shone with that mellow light that softens nature and makes the world forget its cares.

Father Clement had joined the young people; and as they talked of their great happiness, the Priest said:

"It is the way to cement the country, for a union of hearts is stronger than any other agreement. The Mexicans and the Americans have fought for the mastery of Texas; the remnant of the vanquished race lingering yet in the land would never have assimilated, but in time they will amalgamate. The English are cold, unfeeling, they lack sentiment; the Spanish will supply it and life will be sweeter for it—for they can love." And the Frenchman sighed.

"They may love more passionately," agreed Dabney, "but I believe no race loves more tenderly or tenaciously than we Americans; for our love is a compound—having the endurance of the Norseman, the music of the Saxon, and the ardor of the Norman."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Jesuit, "the ardor of the Norman, that is good; that is the little leaven, *mon ami*, that redeems the solid, practical side of your people. But," he added, "the time draws near when I must need leave Joséfa, and it will be a comfort to leave her in a husband's tender care. Besides," he continued, with the light of his old enjoyment of jest bright in his eye, "my pains in trying to teach my godchild have not been in vain. I feel satisfied

that she is now a noble character, for she daily practices, and without a struggle, that mandate most difficult to obey, *To love one's enemy*—for you, *mon cher* Daubigny, are an *Americano*, an *enemy* of the Mexican, while she has the most loyal blood of old Spain in her veins and was born a *subject* of Mexico." The Priest could not speak further for laughing, and Dabney and Joséfa joined with him. Then they lapsed into silence—that perfect silence of contentment. Not a leaf stirred—the air was still, for the hush of the night pervaded the atmosphere until the hooting of an owl fell upon the harmony of quietude like a harsh, discordant note. Hearing which, Joséfa shuddered as she said half audibly:

"Quando el tecolete canta il indio muere."

"What is that thou art saying, my *chiquita*?" asked Father Clement; adding, "I am growing very deaf."

"Nothing," faltered Joséfa, "except Chona used to believe when an owl cried it meant the passing of a soul or that a death was near."

The señorita's voice had involuntarily sunk to a whisper.

"Poor Chona," said the Priest, "was a good but a very simple-minded old woman; while the owl is deemed a wise bird,—hence I do not know whether she could interpret aright his cry, but she might,—so I shall not gainsay it." And leaning over he patted Joséfa's head caressingly and imprinted a kiss on her brow; then he arose to go in the house.

Very slowly did Father Clement move. His step was more halting, his feet dragged heavier than usual. As he reached the doorway his body stum-

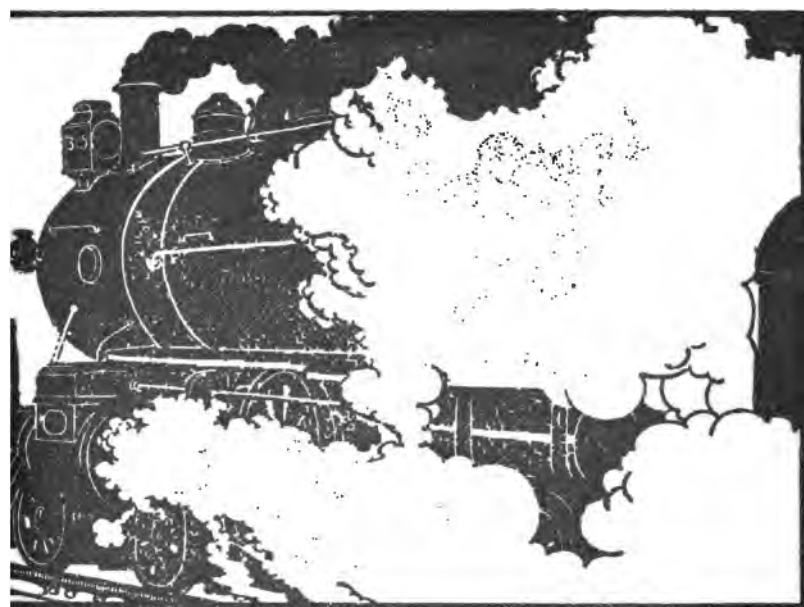
bled and fell. Gently Dabney lifted him so that his head rested in Joséfa's lap. The Priest seemed struggling to speak, but the last sands of life were rapidly running through the glass. His words came slowly, and his voice was so low only the Virginian, who was chafing his heart, heard him as he whispered:

"Into Thy hands I commit my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth!"

And time had ceased to be with Father Clement, for he had crossed the threshold leading to the confines of the beautiful and the blessed.

Dabney put his arms around Joséfa and drew her, crushed and weeping, to his breast.

"Darling," he whispered, his voice shaking with sympathy and tender with love, "you have lost a parent; and I—the noblest friend earth ever gave. In the future we must be to each other what he was to us both; you must lean on me now, entirely and completely; and with God's help and guidance I shall try to comfort and keep you till death us do part."



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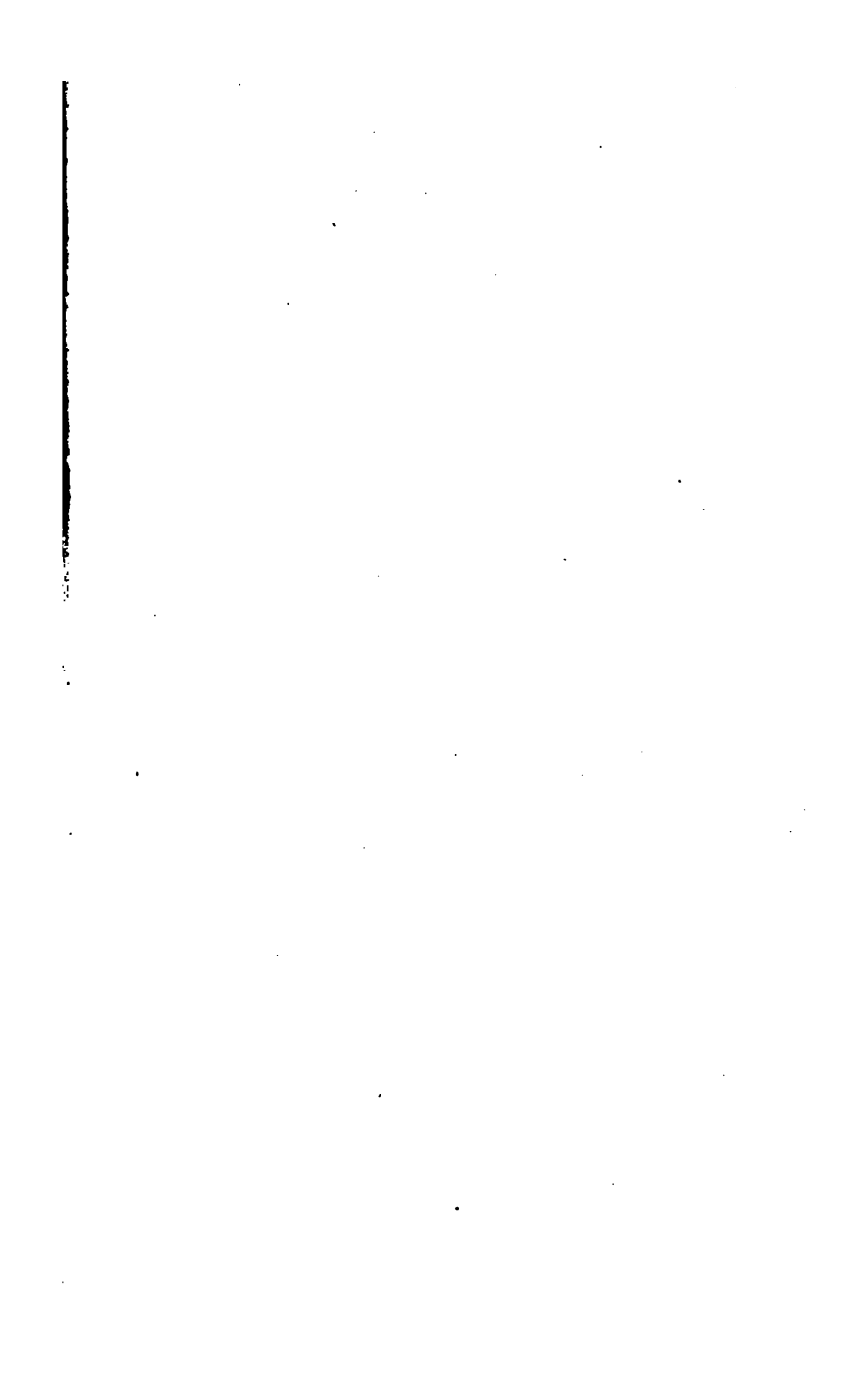
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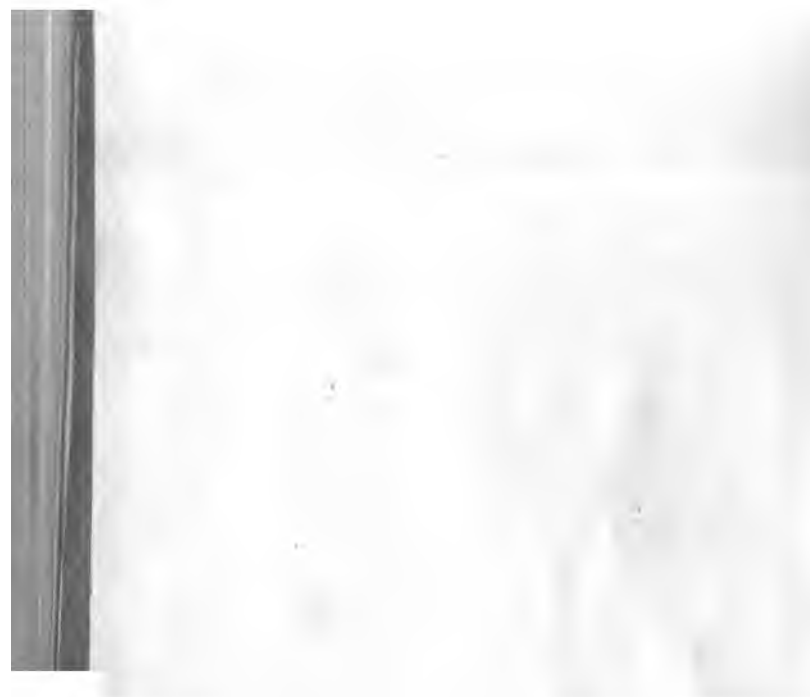
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